ANNUAL BOOK ISSUE

Gregg Easterbrook on The Heart of a New Machine

The Washington Monthly

MARCH 1983/$2

Nicholas Lemann

Today's Best Journalism: Better Than Fiction

James Fallows

The Gridlocked Society

Joseph Nocera

The Case for Teddy White

Robert M. Kaus

Where Marxists Go Right

Jonathan Alter

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LETTERS

Brickbats

Jonathan Alter's "With Friends Like These" [January] was excellently informative on who's who and what for, on the donkey side of the "two-party" team.

So much for one kind of iconoclasm, liberal or cynical or both, depending on the point of view. After expert enough journalistic "balancing," Alter's chief prescriptions are that the American people's so-called "entitlement" programs be slashed and its workers should patriotically take a 50 percent pay cut, to prime a profit pump whose implacable suction already has left us where we are. With friends like you, whom else does Reagan need?

Your subscriber for years, this writer himself a veteran newspaperman, now a construction employer, born a Republican in 1899 and finally a red—a choice Alter helps confirm.

DONALD KENNETH STEVENS
Mill Valley, California

I happen to be a Boston union bricklayer and I have a small proposal to make to Mr. Alter and to other like-minded editorial members of *The Washington Monthly*—I will work for the "good wage" of $8.25 an hour when Mr. Alter and his ilk decide to hire some out-of-work writers by taking a 50 percent wage cut. I'm sure that Mr. Alter could do quite handsomely on half his salary—still retain that "good wage" that he proposes for me—and just think of all the unemployed writers who would be eternally grateful to him if he were to start a trend.

Of course it is possible that Mr. Alter feels that only overpaid blue-collar workers should make the ultimate sacrifice for their "brethren." It is also possible that were I or Mr. Alter to follow his idea that the companies that we work for would simply pocket most of our sacrifice—but these notions are too petty, and I withdraw them. After all, all of us good neoliberal Democrats will surely, ultimately, all hang together.

PETER J. WHALL
Brookline, Massachusetts

The author replies:

Believe it or not, everyone at *The Washington Monthly* works for much less than $8.25 an hour, but that was not my point in urging a waiver of the Davis-Bacon Act. Mr. Whall quite understandably prefers $16.50 to $8.25 an hour, but does he prefer $8.25 an hour to no job at all? I would hope so. The choice I posed is between employing two people at a decent wage and one at a very good wage, and the choice for Democrats should be very clear. A Davis-Bacon waiver would of course be structured so as to assure that the lower wage would come only in exchange for additional job creation. Unlike Tip O'Neill and the other Democrats who support Davis-Bacon, our aim is to put as many people back to work as possible through public jobs. As Mr. Stevens should know, that is hardly an idea embraced by friends of Ronald Reagan.

Toxic Tango

An article that recommends the detoxification of industrial wastes ["Beyond Dumping: The Surprising Solution to the Love Canal Problem," Bruce Piasecki, January] impacts on readers in one of two ways: Those who know little technology, but respect your publication, come away feeling concern, possibly frustration, and often fright; readers who grasp technology come away with the feeling of disgust that your respected publication has been made the tool of a fool. Simply put, *Piasecki doesn't know what he is talking about.* Let me justify that allegation with two examples. Piasecki introduces us to "organic chlorine." Anyone who recalls his high school chemistry knows that chlorine is an element, period, and that "organic" is an adjective that describes a compound that contains carbon. Obviously there is no such thing as chlorine that contains carbon. Probably what Piasecki had read about were organic compounds that contain chlorine and that are toxic. Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are among them, so is carbon tetrachloride, a compound only recently recognized as highly toxic, but now that its hazard is recognized it is tough to buy, yet Piasecki thinks that the Hoechst process that converts "toxic residues. . . into useful substances such as carbon tetrachloride" is the greatest thing since sliced bread.

Then there's activating oxygen with microwaves which "transforms the gas molecules into a highly reactive state. . . " *Nonsense.* Oxygen is inert to microwaves since its molecule has no permanent dipole. Now, Piasecki may not know the principle on which microwave energy is transformed, but can he be excused for not wondering how come this process which "operates. . . with the same ease that microwave ovens handle baked potatoes" doesn't blow up his kitchen whose atmosphere contains over 20 percent oxygen; or how come operating such a simple process treats waste "at a cost of $400 per wet metric ton.' That's 40 cents per quart of water processed, the sale price of most soft drinks. Pretty expensive waste disposal.

But the real problem is not Piasecki's lack of technical acumen; it is his failure to grasp such basic concepts as risk, cost/benefit analysis, or even toxicity. One wonders what will happen when he finds out that all of the people in New York state who died last year had been breathing oxygen.

The point is, first, that everything is made of chemicals and that every one of them can poison, even water and, yes, air. One cannot only drown in water, but even die by ingesting too much of it. And, a standard way to sacrifice laboratory animals is by injecting air into the

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blood stream. Thus the risk questions we must all address constantly and completely is, how much of what is where? What is its possible effect? How sure are we of that and, then, what cost are we willing/able to afford to change those relationships? There are many things we can do that we can't—or won't—pay for. The technologies that Piasecki selects to advocate are a mere sample of what's possible. In my opinion, they represent a naive selection based on incomplete, incorrect assessment of them and of the problems.

B.J. LUBEROFF
Summit, New Jersey

B.J. Luberoff is editor of Chemtech *magazine.*

The author replies:

Mr. Luberoff is right in inferring that I meant organic chlorine compounds when I wrote "organic chlorine." The context of my article and my reference to textile wastes told him as much. And as Mr. Luberoff himself would be the first to admit, just because a product like carbon tetrachloride is hazardous does not mean it is not useful.

As for the role of oxygen in MWP trucks, I was misinformed by my sources. Oxygen does not become inordinately reactive in the Bailin system I described (though it is in more modern devices). The pure oxygen is there to combine with microwave irradiated *wastes*, helping detoxify them. The exploding microwave oven is completely off the point; in contrast to ovens, MWP works by using pure oxygen in a pressurized container to cause a chemical reaction—not an explosion. Although I felt it unnecessary to describe the entire MWP process, I thought it essential to emphasize the relative ease and stifled promise of this device.

Mr. Luberoff's central attack rests on my supposed failure to appreciate risk/benefit analysis. The remarkable good news of my piece is that risk/benefit analysis is now on the side of safe detoxification facilities—instead of continued dumping. To prove this point, I reported on the exacting inventories of the costs of dumping vs. treatment performed by California officials, European leaders, and now American industry—represented by the Hazardous Waste Treatment Council. The $400-per-ton figure he cites for MWP, for example, applies to an early prototype; as my article pointed out, according to the EPA itself this cost can be reduced to one-tenth that if the technology is put to use. (Indeed, just in the last year the Canadians have successfully marketed MWP trucks.) I find it telling that Mr. Luberoff does not contest these important developments.

Piqued about PACs

Seeing your booknote on *PACs Americana* ["Political Booknotes," January], a friend suggested I send you the press releases and sales flyer on the book. Your reviewer is wrong in saying that "the only people who'll be interested in making this $200 investment are candidates seeking a handy guide for soliciting contributions." That is neither our intent nor the result of our very limited early sales effort. The remark is like suggesting that you report changes in government personnel to better enable lobbyists to put in the fix.

The book is intended to enable anyone to do what I now do for major papers—analyze campaign finance reports and determine who is behind the PACs behind the politicians. The *Almanac of American Politics* provides invaluable data about the district and political background of a member of Congress; it tells you where they're coming from. But this book enables the user to learn who sent them, or at least who paid the fare. It's the only listing anywhere of the interests behind all of the PACs.

EDWARD ROEDER
Washington, D.C.

Edward Roeder is the author of PACs Americana.

Steamed about Leg Warmers

I have spent moons patiently reading your atavistic views on women and what they do with their lives, and have gallantly held my temper though frequently on the verge of wanting to hit you over the head with a leg o'mutton. However, this last diatribe of yours about leg warmers ["Tilting at Windmills," January] was such bull, that it loosed in me a fury so wild and raging, I could no longer control myself.

You are obviously a bovine of the ilk who holds passionate feelings about women's calves and righteously believes that we should kowtow to your every moo. Well, frankly my dear, I don't give a damn that you're a gentleman who prefers Hanes. Leg warmers are an item used by dancers and adapted for general use by women because they serve a very real purpose—warmth. And if they make my calves look fat and prevent you from ogling my well-turned lower limb, tough!

May I suggest that on a cold winter day in D.C., you don knickers (buckled above your knobby knees) and nylon hose, and then hike briskly once or twice around the Smithsonian and see if you don't make an apology to all women about their good sense.

BARBARA MEHLMAN
New York, New York

Flammable Arguments

Alfred J. Watkin's article, "Big Oil vs. Cheap Gas" in January contained some errors of fact in addition to misquoting me. It also left some misimpressions about the enforcement activities at this agency.

First of all, I told your reporter that our Enforcement Division looked at data organized by Ms. Lower of the Consumer Federation of America and concluded that it was not useful at this time. I did not say that Enforcement concluded there was "no violation of law."

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Second, the article implies that Mr. Lloyd, deputy assistant general counsel for Enforcement, did not read the study. That is not true.

Further, your reporter implies that this agency is not concerned with overpricing because it is using its own methods and data instead of Ms. Lower's. That is ridiculous.

The commission is conducting a number of investigations into possible overpricing of natural gas, all of which are confidential pursuant to the commission's rules relating to investigations. It is for that reason that we are unable to provide more specific information.

Whether producers have been collecting and consequently pipelines paying in excess of the maximum lawful prices under the NGPA has been and continues to be the subject of non-public investigations by the commission's Enforcement Division.

One of these private investigations, publicly announced by the commission on October 6, 1982, is an industry-wide investigation into possible pricing violations by both producers and pipelines under both the Natural Gas Act and the Natural Gas Policy Act. More than $65 million in refunds resulting from these pricing violations already have been flowed through to pipeline customers.

In addition, a number of settlements recently approved by the commission will result in the payment of over $35 million in restitution to pipeline customers and an additional $1 million in civil penalties for violations of the NGPA.

RACHELLE PATTERSON
Washington, D.C.

Rachelle Patterson is director of public information for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Concerning the Natural Gas Policy Act, Alfred Watkins counsels us, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." But the NGPA is hardly working when it keeps so much of the nation's gas under price controls, thereby sacrificing a great deal of production from known gas reservoirs. Under the artificially low price ceilings set by the NGPA, many wells are being abandoned prematurely because producers cannot cover the costs of enhanced production techniques or even the cost of maintaining existing equipment.

In arguing that the NGPA is working "better than expected," Mr. Watkins overlooks the numerous distortions and peculiarities in natural gas markets caused by the system of federal price controls:

—Users in some areas are paying more for their natural gas than users in other areas—in some cases, as much as 75 percent more.

—Residential gas prices are rising while many industrial gas prices are declining or holding steady.

—Domestic gas prices vary widely. Some gas sells for as little as 20 cents or less per mcf at the wellhead while other prices are as high as $9 to $10.

Here are three statements in Mr. Watkins's article that are particularly at odds with the facts:

Mr. Watkins: "By partially decontrolling prices, the NGPA did exactly what any Economics 101 freshman might have predicted: it increased natural gas supply. In fact, in large part because of the NGPA, we're now rolling in the stuff, the result of a natural gas rush that even the most die-hard free marketeers never imagined."

Fact: Although the United States has the estimated potential to produce enough gas to last at least another 50 years, at current usage, the country's *proved* reserves (gas that has been discovered and could be produced under existing economic operating conditions) have fallen by one-third since 1968 and are smaller now than when the NGPA was enacted. Since enactment of the NGPA, we have used more gas than we found in every year except 1981. Reserves now constitute only about a ten-year supply at current production rates. Under NGPA, price controls are discouraging exploration and production of all except the most expensive and hard-to-find gas—which is certainly not a way to help hold down gas costs.

Mr. Watkins: ". . . by effectively tying all gas prices to oil prices, decontrol would ruin the best chance we have to break free of the OPEC stranglehold that has so debilitated our economy."

Fact: Natural gas decontrol will result in more gas production than will occur under the NGPA and this will mean less U.S. dependence on OPEC oil. Crude oil decontrol has significantly weakened OPEC by reducing U.S. oil imports. More natural gas produced here at home will replace oil in many uses and help further reduce oil imports.

Mr. Watkins: "The call for decontrol also ignores the best and most obvious solution. Congress can simply require pipelines and producers to renegotiate certain take-or-pay clauses, forcing gas prices to respond to supply and demand."

Fact: A legislative abrogation of take-or-pay clauses, as some in Congress have proposed, would have no effect on factors that cause 84 to 88 percent of increases in consumer gas prices. Those increases are the result of distortions in the natural gas market caused by the NGPA—distortions that can be alleviated effectively only if controls are removed.

If we are to learn from the lessons of the 1970s, we should recognize the problems caused by NGPA price controls and support phased natural gas decontrol by January 1, 1985 as the most practical solution to these problems.

HARRY H. HARDY
Washington, D.C.

Harry Hardy is public relations director of the American Petroleum Institute.

The author replies:

Ms. Patterson misquotes me to defend her agency's record. I never accused the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission of concluding that there was "no violation of the law"; rather, I said that FERC officials, (including Patterson) asserted, without being specific, that

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violations were not apparent from Lower's allegations that pipelines are purchasing pre-1973 gas at prices substantially above the legal ceiling. I have no way of knowing whether FERC has been diligently investigating all cases of overpricing; I can report that Lower's research has been receiving a great deal more consideration from FERC since the article appeared.

Some distortions are inevitable under *any* system of gas pricing, including decontrol. The real issue is how to price gas in a manner that produces the most good for the most people. In that regard, Hardy's "facts" actually prove that abolishing NGPA would be counterproductive. NGPA was passed in 1978. Two years later, proved reserves started increasing, primarily because NGPA provided much-needed incentives for exploration and development of new reservoirs. Contrary to Hardy's unsubstantiated assertion, decontrolling old gas will not reduce U.S. reliance on OPEC oil. Indeed, according to the pro-decontrol Department of Energy report I cited, old-gas decontrol will reduce incentives to look for deep gas, accelerate depletion of already discovered reservoirs, and lead to *increased* oil imports by the late 1980s.

Finally, Hardy's claim that take-or-pay contracts are not responsible for rapidly rising gas prices makes no sense. According to nearly all accounts, the combination of a gas glut and take-or-pay contracts is forcing pipelines to purchase expensive gas while refusing delivery of *available* low-cost, price-controlled supplies. Decontrolling all gas prices while keeping take-or-pay would lead to even higher prices; abrogating these contract provisions while retaining NGPA will permit pipelines to purchase the lowest cost supplies while still providing incentives for additional exploration.

Pinstriped Subversives

I want to express my gratitude to Joseph Nocera for "The Merger Mongers," Phil Keisling for "Industrial America's Suicide Pact," as well as Lowell Dyson and Jonathan Alter.

I hope your December issue has a strong effect on the government and the people.

As for Joe Flom, Bruce Wasserstein, Guy Wyser-Pratte, as well as a good many others who are known only by their actions, WITH AMERICANS LIKE THESE, WHO NEEDS RUSSIANS?

PETER FENNEY
Berkeley, California

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TILTING AT WINDMILLS

In my role as editor of this magazine I feel that it is important for me always to keep the ideal in view, since the politicians in this town tend to let their vision be limited by what is possible now. But I once was a politician, and I understand the importance of the art of the possible, of doing what you can do today even though you know how far short it is of what you think should be done. And that politician side of me feels intense admiration for the Social Security compromise hammered out by the president's commission and the White House staff.

I understand that Patrick Moynihan, Robert Dole, Robert Ball, and James Baker deserve the lion's share of the credit, and I congratulate them. The compromise, by taxing half the Social Security income of recipients with other income above $25,000, takes the first step toward the ultimate reform this magazine seeks—elimination of benefits for people who don't need them.

By the way, I'm told on very high authority that Reagan privately shares our view, that in fact he is constantly muttering, "Why should the Annenbergs get Social Security?" If he would only say that in public! . . .

The old saying that there is some good in everyone may be true, but sometimes finding it requires genuine dedication. For a truly heroic display of such dedication, I wish to honor Rabbi Shmaryahu T. Swirsky of Miami, who delivered the eulogy at Meyer Lansky's funeral. "The rabbi," according to UPI, "remembered Lansky as a learned and compassionate man, a devoted father and grandfather and a generous friend of Israel.". . .

Sages have noted the rich variety of paths that can lead to success. Take the case of Milton Coleman of *The Washington Post*. Coleman was the editor most responsible for the Janet Cooke hoax. By ignoring the warnings of other staff members that the story of the child addict was a fraud, he subjected both the *Post* and the Pulitzer Prize to one of the most embarrassing moments in their respective histories. His reward: first, a promotion at the *Post*, and now an appointment as a nominating juror for this year's Pulitzers. . . .

Parties are a major part of Washington life. Many people go out four or five nights a week. Unfortunately, Washington parties are seldom much fun. The reason is that neither you nor the other guests are invited because you're delightful. You are invited because you're an editor. And the other fellow is invited because he's a congressman, or a White House staff member, or an FCC commissioner. No attention is paid to whether you share the same enthusiasms or have the same senses of humor. I suspect one reason the Redskins are so popular here is that they give these diverse assortments of guests one common enthusiasm, one thing to talk about to avoid the terrible boredom that's just around the corner.

Why then do people go to these parties? For one thing, it gives one a warm feeling of importance to be surrounded by the mighty. The sense of this is palpable at a major White House social event or at an A-list dinner at Katharine Graham's. Very much related is the fear of losing status by not being there and having your absence noted as a sign of your decline. For some people, these parties, however deadly, are the life they dreamed of back in Peoria. For them and for others, it is important that the people back home know that they are invited to such occasions, that they have indeed made it.

I have a simple solution to offer. There will be no parties, just invitations. With the invitation will come a

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complete guest list, which will also be sent to Washington and hometown newspapers. That way we'll all have the satisfaction of having been invited—and of having it known we were invited—without having to endure the event itself.

Of course some people will still feel they actually have to attend the party. Their motive may be kindness. ("Sure, Charlie is a bit tiresome, but his feelings will be hurt if no one shows up.") Or, and this would more likely be the case, the motive is "the stories I can tell later on." A lot of people live today so they can sound interesting tomorrow. What they do today may be truly tedious or painful, but if it can be turned into a good story later on, it will be an experience they will not only endure but devoutly pursue. Perhaps the story will be about something cute Nancy said to Ronnie at the White House dinner or a delightfully amusing account of the night the British ambassador had a bit too much to drink. Whatever it is, it is being able to tell it that inspires these people to put on that black tie and go out again tonight . . . .

Buried in the Letters section of *Time*'s January 31 issue was some information I think belonged in the news columns. It was in this letter from Robert A. Mullin:

"As a former deputy comptroller of the currency for special surveillance, I know that all national banks, large and small, were regularly informed of their excessive and risky loans to foreign countries. These loans were not made solely on the recommendation of young lending officers; they were approved by the banks' directors. The comptroller's attempts to reduce or eliminate these loans were thwarted by a Federal Reserve Board that contended that loans to foreign countries should not be criticized.". . .

Lobbyists have long known that the most efficient way to avoid unpleasant legislation is to concentrate their attention on the committee that decides what bills will get to the floor. When I was a member of the West Virginia legislature, liberal legislation was often throttled during the final 20 days of a session by a device called the Special Calendar, which kept bills not on it from reaching the floor and which was controlled by the Rules Committee, which in turn was controlled by conservative lobbyists. Finally this year the liberals got control of the state senate's Rules Committee. Did they strike a blow for democracy by abolishing the Special Calendar? Of course not. They extended it to 59 days of the 60-day session. . . .

Deep in the second page of *The Washington Post*'s account of the National Press Club's annual dinner was this revealing little nugget about the culture of Washington journalism:

"Competition was keen among reporters and the news organizations they work for to bring as guests the most glittery government uppity-ups."

These government officials know they are conferring favor on the news organization whose table they grace. Do you think they expect nothing in return? . . .

As an enthusiastic admirer of Alan Brinkley's book on Huey Long and Father Coughlin, I was astounded by several things Brinkley said in his review of William O'Neill's *The Great Schism: Stalinism and the American Intellectuals* in the January 9 *New York Times Book Review*. He adopts Lillian Hellman's defense of the Stalinist intellectuals: "Whatever our mistakes, I do not believe we did our country any harm."

The harm was in fact devastating. There was in the mid-forties a strong anti-nuclear peace movement in this country, favoring such causes as rapprochement with Russia, world government, and an international police force. But it was thoroughly disillusioned and disheartened by the Berlin blockade, the Soviet overthrow of the democratic Czech government in 1948, and the compelling evidence that had begun to surface of communist treason in the United States and Great Britain. There was great merit, if considerable innocence, in that movement, and its death was an evil day for this country and the world.

Another evil result was the rise of Joe McCarthy, who would never have gotten anywhere had it not been for the credibility his cause was given by the Hiss and Rosenberg cases. Brinkley describes these cases as "still the subject of fierce controversy." While there are certainly humane grounds for opposing the execution of the Rosenbergs, there can be no reasonable controversy as to their guilt on the part of anyone who has studied the evidence. And I did so as one who desperately wanted to find them innocent. The evidence against Hiss was equally overwhelming. I think the real reason for the "controversy"

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around this case was that Whittaker Chambers looked like a depraved slob and Alger Hiss like a nice, respectable, young Ivy Leaguer.

Brinkley also says that "in the long history of the Red scare," there were "only three" possible cases of espionage or treason—the Rosenbergs and Hiss in America and Klaus Fuchs in England. How, I wonder, does he describe Guy Burgess, Donald MacLean, and Kim Philby?. . . .

As a drinker I've long been concerned with the government's failure to require the makers of alcoholic beverages to disclose the contents on the label. There seems a strong possibility that many beers, wines, and liquors contain additives that could considerably heighten the risk of consuming the beverages. Now I learn from Jim Mintz of *Mother Jones* and Ken Cummins of the *Florida Times-Union* that smokers face similar dangers. The additives used—mostly, it appears, to restore the flavor lost when tar content is reduced—have such reassuring names as 3 Hexenyl propionate and Hexyl 2-furoate. Glycerol, of which 35 million pounds are added to cigarettes annually, is suspected, when burned during the smoking of a cigarette, to produce a chemical called acrolein, which interferes with the normal clearing of the lungs. . . .

Skillful public relations can minimize the adverse effects of many unhappy events. My favorite example of such damage control remains the announcement of Senator Edward Kennedy's divorce on a day the papers were filled with news about the Reagan inauguration and the release of the hostages. Still, there are some disasters that even the most artful practitioner of public relations cannot conceal. Once, when a young aide was advising Lyndon Johnson on how to put a favorable gloss on an especially unhappy development, LBJ answered, "Son, you can't shine shit.". . .

We keep telling you that the neoliberal faith is spreading, but even we have been surprised by some recent converts. Guess, for example, the identity of the person described in this paragraph from *The New York Times*:

"He stressed the need to improve the output of workers. . . by linking 'productive' or 'shoddy' work to earnings. . . and encourage 'initiative and enterprise.' "

The *Times* was talking about Yuri Andropov. And the city of Peking has not even been content to adopt our proposed elimination of half of the tenured civil service jobs. It is abolishing tenure completely for newly hired employees. They will be hired on contracts that can be terminated by either party with three months' notice. . . .

One reason parents send their children to private schools has nothing to do with the decline of public schools that has so often been lamented in these pages. It is explained in a recent article in *GEO* about Le Rosey, an exclusive preparatory school in Switzerland:

"The high tuition buys entry into a powerful network of contacts that stretches around the world. Even the younger students seem acutely aware of forming bonds that will be useful later on. It is assumed that the 16-year-old heir to an American chemical conglomerate will benefit from his friendship with Sheikh Yamani's son, a recent graduate. All former students carry around wallet-size alumni cards."

The author of the article, Theodora Lurie, goes on to describe one student named Isabella:

"The youngest scion of a powerful publishing dynasty in Italy, she told me she expected to attend an Ivy League college. But she rarely opened a book outside of class. When I reminded her about tough admission policies, Isabella shrugged good-naturedly and confided that her family had excellent connections."

There is much that is obviously wrong about such snobbery, but the one aspect of it that I think is less commonly recognized is how misleading it is for the students themselves and for their parents. From my own observation of people who have reached the top, connections may have eased their paths, particularly in getting a first job, but once they reached the point in life where their performance on the job could be seen and appraised, demonstrated ability became much more important than their connections.

Connections may keep you on the periphery of power—"We've got to take care of dear old Robby"—but it usually takes talent and hard work to reach the top in any field. And the people who have put all their faith in connections turn out to have a pathetic air of the hanger-on, treasuring their old

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school ties and their membership in the right clubs as symbols of the success that they can't admit their connections failed to give them, thereby passing on to their own offspring the same mistaken hopes and values. . . .

We all hope that economic recovery is underway, but with 12 million unemployed, the road back is not going to be easy, and it is especially important that we avoid fruity proposals that might make it more difficult. One such proposal is being considered by the administration. The other is advocated by its critics.

The first comes from Martin Feldstein, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, who says he thinks taxes based not on income but on consumption are "a promising. . . a very attractive approach." Approach to disaster is what they would really mean. What we need now is to increase consumption, not discourage it.

The other danger comes from Peter Peterson and his allies, who are right about the importance of doing something now to control deficits in the future, but wrong in not realizing that our concern should be with those projected for 1986, 1987, and thereafter, rather than those projected for the next couple of years. Deficit spending now can help fuel recovery, as *The New York Times* explained in its fine lead editorial in the January 23 edition. Alexander Cockburn made the same point in a good column that appeared the following week in *The Wall Street Journal*. . . .

Fred Reed is a columnist for *The Washington Times*. Like most conservative columnists, he seldom errs on the side of excessive compassion, but he sometimes can be very funny. Recently he asked why there are no telephones inside Washington's subway stations:

"Surely no grave harm would accrue to the republic if, say, a fellow could call his wife to get him without walking over half of suburbia in a driving rain to find a phone. Is there some obscure regulation in effect here? Some question of access for the handicapped? Possibly a federal judge has ordered that all phones (1) be reachable by midgets, (2) be reachable by basketball players with fused vertebrae, (3) have an amplifier for the hard-of-hearing, and (4) offer counseling for the disturbed."

In reviewing what I wrote about Vietnam last month, I realize I omitted one important step in my thinking: Why did I support the use of volunteers and oppose the use of draftees? It was that I think the use of draftees is justifiable only in situations of absolute moral clarity—as, say, in aiding England against Hitler—whereas there was always considerable moral ambiguity surrounding our cause in Vietnam. There were, on the one hand, millions of South Vietnamese who did not want to be ruled by the North. However, their own rulers were such a bizarre assemblage of crooks and clowns, it was highly unlikely that they would succeed in leading their country to a victory or to a form of government that was better than anything other than communism. So, I thought, it's okay to send volunteers who know what they're getting into but criminal to compel draftees who may oppose the war or not understand it. . . .

Last month we told you about the West Virginia lawyers and their tax-subsidized trip to the Gator Bowl. It turns out that Iowa lawyers used a similar device, the Peach Bowl Federal Practice Seminar, to follow the football fortunes of the University of Iowa. The title of their seminar may prove a bit too blatant for even the IRS to swallow. And the *Des Moines Register* has asked how, since all the instructors and all the participants were from Iowa, could a tax deduction be justified for traveling to Atlanta, Georgia, for the seminar. . . .

Of all the outrageous decisions by the United States Supreme Court since World War II, three stand out in my mind as the most odious. One was the Smith Act decision in the early fifties that made it a crime merely to advocate Marxist theory.

The second was the repudiation of democracy that came in the 1977 decision that held that a political appointee's free speech was infringed when he was fired after his party lost an election. What on earth does democracy mean other than that the people have the right to vote their rulers out?

The third decision came this January when the Court ruled that labor unions are liable for back pay if they fail to press the appeals of employees who have been fired. The most dangerous aspect of American unionism today is their tendency to automatically defend the

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discharged employee, whether he is right or wrong. At a time when both industry and government suffer from rampant inefficiency, it is crucial that they be able to fire the people who aren't producing and that they not have to fear being tied up indefinitely in court if they get rid of real losers. What this decision does is take the union leaders' present tendency to defend the incompetent and exacerbate it with the threat of "Listen, Buster, if you don't fight for that loser, you may be stuck with his back wages.". . .

Speaking of unions, the Uniformed Firefighter's Association is mounting an all-out campaign against New York City's proposal to reduce the crews on pump trucks from five men to four. "If the mayor pursues this course," says the union's president, "he would be putting dollars ahead of lives." But consider the reply of Paul Dickstein, deputy director of the city's office of management and budget: "Virtually every other large city has three-man companies. Some have four, but we were not able to find any other large city with five." . . .

And speaking of the New York City Fire Department, ten of its inspectors were arrested in January and accused of accepting bribes for overlooking safety violations at more than 50 apartment buildings in Manhattan. Who, we might ask, is really putting dollars ahead of lives?

Bribery of fire inspectors and policemen is widespread. I once worked in a building that had but one fire escape, under which were always piled highly inflammable cardboard boxes and trash. From that office we went often to a restaurant where hundreds of people were packed in an upper floor from which they could exit only by two very narrow stairways, neither of which was protected by a fire door. I also used to patronize a Washington liquor store where every Saturday around noon one would encounter a high-ranking police official—identifiable by a white shirt and a lot of gold braid—talking to the owner. Of course, it may be that they were just old friends.

Last month we spoke of the need to understand why the motivation of most doctors gradually changes from idealism to greed. It is equally important to understand why the same transformation occurs in so many policemen and firemen. . . .

And speaking of the doctors, Diana McClellan, the gossip columnist of *The Washington Times*, had an item in a recent column about "the battle royal between two top docs acrimoniously splitting a high-powered practice. 'Much nastier than divorce settlements,' sniffles a patient. 'Who gets the Cabinet Member? The Comical Columnist? The Editor Extraordinaire?' "

I was telling a friend whose father is a doctor about the item, and he commented that the big fight these days in his father's clinic is how to split the take between the surgeons, who are pulling in between $300,000 and $400,000, and the rest of the doctors, who are only in the $100,000 to $200,000 class. . . .

The two greatest problems facing the small businessman are that (1) government officials don't understand him because few of them have ever been in his shoes, and (2) business lobbies like the United States Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers consistently subordinate his concerns to the interests of the industrial giants.

For the struggling small business the result of this lack of understanding and lobbying muscle can be catastrophic. Highly profitable businesses, for example, will prefer, say, a two percent gross receipts tax to a 30 percent tax on profits because the former will cost them far less. But, for the struggling business, the gross-receipts tax can mean the difference between breaking even and going under. Suppose your gross income is $500,000 and your expenses are also $500,000. You've broken even—but only if taxes are levied on net income that you don't have. Even a two percent tax on gross income means you've lost $10,000, and that could be curtains.

A similar fact that few people understand is the impact of the Social Security tax on the struggling businessman. It is a tax he has to pay, regardless of whether he has a profit or not. Now use your horse sense and contemplate the impact of this fact on his hiring practices. Instead of hiring the maximum number of employees and decreasing unemployment, he will hire the minimum—and a lot of people who could be working never get the chance.

—*Charles Peters*

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MEMO OF THE MONTH

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

JAN - 6 1983

OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATION

MEMORANDUM

TO : All EPA Employees at Waterside Mall

FROM : Stormy Friday, Director
Facilities and Support Services Division

SUBJECT: Clean-Up '83

We have begun a major clean-up and repair effort in Waterside Mall. Staff from the GSA, Town Center Management (the building owner) and the Facilities and Support Services Division have formed a team to tour the complex, floor by floor, and identify deficiencies. We are focusing on building maintenance; safety hazards; surplus or broken furniture and equipment; excess paper, files, records, etc.; and boxes used for storage. You will be able to watch each phase of inspection, repair and clean-up, as we are video taping our progress and will show the tapes on the EPA TV monitors.

In addition to this effort, we are proceeding with office and public space painting, and carpet and drapery replacement. This activity will continue over the next few months and will add to the overall improvement of our working environment.

Your continued support and cooperation will be appreciated. Those programs offices that put forth the greatest effort in terms of clean-up will be publically recognized by the Office of Administration. Please help us make Waterside Mall a more pleasant place to work.

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THE HEART OF A NEW MACHINE

by Gregg Easterbrook

Through history, men and women have known that their lives cannot be complete without companionship. But to want companionship and to find it have been (historically speaking) two different matters. Seekers of companionship have turned to others like themselves; to pets; to the bottle; to books, where they can imagine communication with the author; to religion, where they can reach for communication with something greater. Each of these has drawbacks. Men and women, for one, are notoriously fickle. Pets and booze, on the other hand, are far too difficult to shake. Books are silent. God's voice is so soft, even the faithful have trouble hearing it.

And so the search is always on for a new companion, or at least a new replacement for companionship. For a while, drugs looked like an answer. Mind-altering drugs promised what Colin Wilson called "value experiences," the illusion that some meaningful event, connecting the drug-taker with a larger and affectionate whole, had occurred within the taker's own brain. As the addicts and the basket cases of the sixties began to add up, we all learned what a crock that was. Sensible people swore off drugs, but remained receptive to other developments.

Now there is one, the computer. More specifically the personal computer, the smaller machine that's designed to fulfill an individual's information-processing needs, but which is already fulfilling emotional needs as well. Why is everyone nuts about the computer? It isn't just the practical value; although computers are fabulous for some uses, many people who buy them don't really need them. And it isn't just the novelty; digital watches were novelties too, but they ran their course while interest in computers keeps building and building.

It's where the computer fits in our quest for companionship, and our recurring bad dream of loneliness. Computers can give solace to some people, and are even a little bit like people. Soon computers will become a great deal like people—perhaps, to some tastes, an improvement on the real thing. Ensconced in dens and basements all over the country, their stares fixed on computer terminals, men and women of all ages and backgrounds are seeking not to master R.A.M. chips and logic gates, but to find a substitute for the human world that overwhelms them. No longer is

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Illustration by Robert Soule

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just the math-whiz faction losing itself in computers, now it's everyone, and feelings about other people, rather than love of the machines, are behind it. It is not our urgent need for bar graphs, but our aching hearts, that is drawing computers into many American lives.

Computers have many kinds of appeal, primarily, of course, practical appeal. For writers, accountants, small-business managers, and those who grapple with any kind of inventory, the personal computer or word processor is a gift from on high. Nearly all small computers also have amusement value. Some are supposed to be toys (video games) and others have enough playful qualities to serve as toys. The user can ask his small computer questions, give it orders, make it flash and meep, and cause graphic displays to appear in a sophisticated update of the Etch-A-Sketch.

But let's be realistic. How many times can you see your overdrawn checkbook converted into a sine wave before the thrill wears off? Where is the lasting fascination of watching sentences deleted from paragraphs? (Unless, of course, you're a magazine editor, whose life's work is deleting sentences from paragraphs.) The lawyer may be well-served by a small legal computer at the office; today's legal computers will arrange citations for briefs and run *Corpus Juris Secundum* in the wink of an eye. But when he buys another computer for his home, something else is afoot. The business manager, too, may need a computer at work, but when he brings one into his home—where there is no payroll to manage—there must be some other explanation. Ditto for the doctor with a computer at home, the literature professor, the student, and many others.

What matters is not what computers do, but *how* they do it. They provide the illusion of human interaction. Asking questions of a computer, for instance, is reasonably similar to asking questions of another person—better, maybe, because the computer answers exactly what is asked, doesn't grumble, and doesn't mouth off. Working with a computer, all movement and dancing words, is reasonably similar to working with another person—but easier, because it's less emotionally demanding, safer, and you certainly don't have to look your best. Computers, unlike people, are wholly controllable and predictable. You can't fail to get along with a computer; it will never turn on you, and it will never insist on talking about what it wants to talk about or doing what it wants to do. It will never find you boring, never forget to call, never ask a favor. Anyone who has used a good computer has sensed this secret allure.

Already, small computers can create a facsimile of human interaction via the question-and-answer; the operator can even tell his computer secrets by putting personal information into the memory. While this illusion of human interaction is still a limited one, owing to communication through the keyboard and the need to master each machine's program commands, this is about to change. Sometime in the 1980s "direct access" computers that respond to spoken commands and speak back should become a reality. Voice-recognition "devices" for computers are progressing to a useful stage, as are voice synthesizers that will allow computers to speak, sounding not like the Cylons on "Battlestar Galactica," but like regular folks. (Some "talking" computers are already on the market, but they can only repeat programmed phrases, and the user cannot address them in any meaningful way. Mostly they nag about the obvious, like the voiceboxes in new Datsuns that announce when the car's door is open; if talking back to these machines made a difference, all you'd want to say would be, "Shut up.")

Once owners can talk to their computers directly and receive an original response, the illusion of human interaction will be nearly complete. And the compelling power of computers will become much greater. Consider, for instance, that perhaps 90 percent of the regular communication between people—even two close people, like husband and wife—is mundane. The bulk of daily conversation consists of simple, flat statements like, "what do you want," "wait a second," "I'm over here," "it's pretty good." Moments of lyrical expression, or deep emotional contact, are rare even in the most intimate love affairs. If we could eavesdrop on a poet and poetess strolling through a tropical paradise, for every exclamation of lasting beauty we would hear a hundred comments on the order of "Hey, get a load of these coconuts." Among people who aren't emotionally involved, conversation is usually pure routine—"what time do you need time," "I'll have the fish," "turn left three degrees." All of which is to say, most of what passes between human beings could easily be programmed into a computer.

This has nothing to do with the prospect of artificial intelligence and whether computers can be made to "think." Imitating human speech, and human interaction, will not require "thinking," just a sophisticated program of situation-cognizance and a good library of comments to make in

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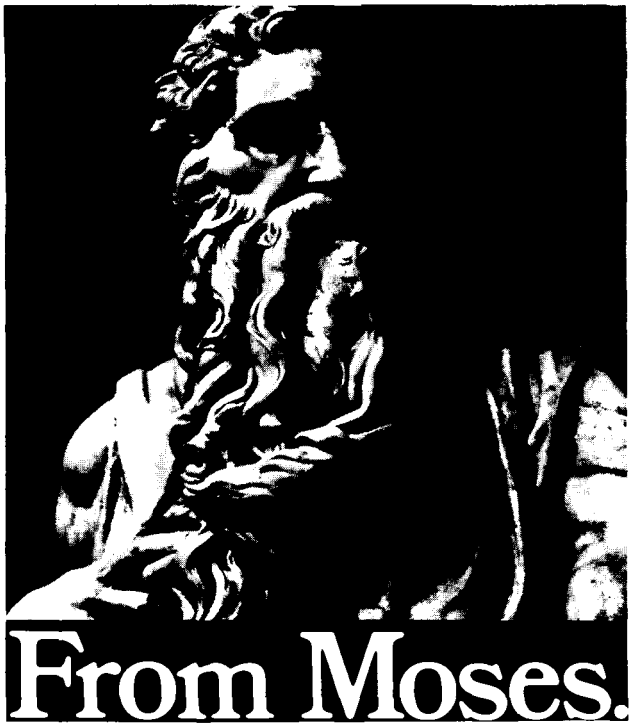

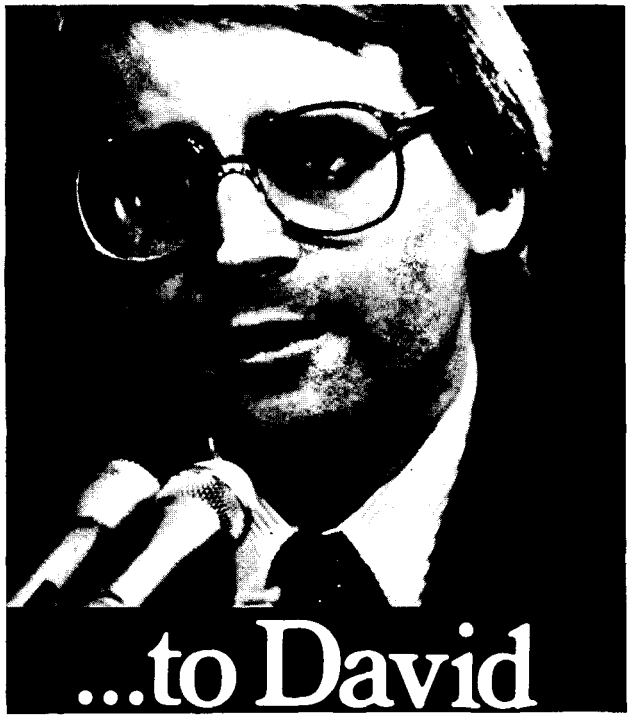

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given situations. Speaking computers could be made to greet their users in the morning by saying, "What's the weather like out there?" or "Sleep well last night?" Jumping off key words in the user's reply, the computer would consult its memory for an appropriate follow-up remark. If the reply is "No, couldn't sleep a wink," the computer might move to, "Really? Not feeling so good?" None of this requires artificial intelligence, just lots of memory capacity, fast processing, and a skilled programmer. Programming at this level is still a challenge today, but by the end of the 1980s, it will be a parlor trick. The addition of sensors (once they are perfected) may enable coming computers to *know* how you slept, or what the weather is out there. A home computer with aural sensors, for instance, could be programmed to ignore commotion during daylight hours, but if it hears tossing and turning between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m., to assume its owner hasn't slept well and greet him at daybreak with, "What's the matter, something on your mind?"

If this sounds like a Big Brother nightmare, think about it from the lonely person's perspective. Ours is a society where increasingly thousands—if not millions—of people live alone, fearing their neighbors, and with no social ties to family or church. For my generation, the one turning 30, this pain can be particularly acute. We are children highly skilled in talking, but often with no one to talk to. We acquired, through childhood in the affluent turmoil of the sixties, an especially sharp knowledge of where we are, but few clues as to where we belong. We feel that words are powerful and that somewhere must be the words that will make it right; yet we fear everything we say is ignored or misunderstood. In this environment a talking computer, with some rudimentary awareness of its user's personal condition, which *always pays attention*, could be a blessing. It couldn't possibly provide true companionship, or the emotional heights experienced by lovers, friends, parents, and offspring. But it could keep that mundane chatter—the background noise of human relations—going at all times, providing an illusion of companionship.

Today's computers, even with their keyboard-access and restricted programs, already provide some illusion of companionship (note how words like "delightful" and "cute" are applied to the new round of "user-friendly" machines such as Apple's Lisa, which flashes messages on her screen). Imagine how much more attractive it will be when the computer illusion of human interaction is refined enough to pass for the real thing at its lower levels.

Terminal Loneliness

A common failing of friendship, and a central failing of romance, is that we try to mold others to fit the image we seek, instead of experiencing them as they are. Everyone is guilty of this at some point—of longing for a fantasy, or a convenience, rather than accepting the less perfect but ultimately more rewarding presence of a person's true nature. Molding others in your own image seldom works, however, or at least not for long. People are extremely resistant to such tampering.

Early video games such as Pong encouraged two or more people to participate. But sales took off only when computer games were redesigned so people could play alone.

But computers aren't. In fact, computers crave it. The computer program is, by nature, the reflected image of the programmer's desires. Powerful small computers can be programmed to behave in whatever way pleases their owners, and as computer power expands, and computers learn to speak, it will be possible to give computers "personality traits," or at least the illusion of them. Again, this has nothing to do with artificial intelligence, merely with chip capacity. A computer could be programmed to show interest in some subjects but not others; to speak in the desired tones of voice; to discuss certain things at certain times of day; to deliver flattery. The computer would only be acting out stage directions, of course, but acting them in a very convincing and convenient way.

In nearly all movie and television science fiction, it's been noted, the computers and the robots have far more personality than the living characters. C3P0 was more intriguing and less predictable than Luke Skywalker; the evil robot

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Lucifer, with his droll wit, had all the good lines in "Galactica"; the kindly robot Robbie nearly stole the show in *Forbidden Planet*. Some of this traces, of course, to the quality of scriptwriting and to reliance on characters so wooden that mechanical men look real by comparison. But some is due to the ways in which computers can be seen as more desirable than people. Computers can offer the appearance of life—the talking, the joking, the interest in what's up—without any of the emotional or spiritual complications. Computers have no feelings, so they can be insulted or mistreated without guilt. They have no rights, so they can be switched off should they grow tiresome. Most important, since they are not living and have no expectations, we incur no obligations to them.

These are more than fine points of the conventions of sci-fi scriptwriting: they reflect on how, today, we are beginning to relate to our electronic companions. And they suggest why many of us might come to view computers as companions of choice. This has already happened in fiction. In Arthur Clarke's new best seller, *2010: Odyssey Two*, sequel to *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Dave, the metamorphized star-baby-astronaut, returns in ghost-like form. Meanwhile HAL, the mad computer, has been cured of his antisocial tendencies by a Freudian psychiatrist. At the end of *2010*, Dave departs for some other-worldly higher plane to await some unspecified great event that will happen near the end of time; to while away the intervening hours, he selects as his companion, you guessed it, HAL the computer.

When the video game industry started, its first products were conceived as moving versions of the traditional game arrangement—two people would play against each other, only through the medium of a machine instead of on a board. Pong, the first video game, matched two or four players, as did almost all of Atari's early games, like Combat (two tanks) and Indy 500 (two race cars). Video game sales didn't take off until the group-play orientation was eliminated and games were designed as man-versus-machine. Space Invaders, Asteroids, Pac-Man, Defender, Pitfall, Galaxian, Frogger—all those that have really made money—are played alone. Computer game manufacturers finally realized that their market appeal lay not in colors and motion, but in the fact that their computers could substitute for an opponent. Conventional games like Monopoly and Risk simply can't be played by a single person and the only play-alone conventional game, Solitaire, has become a cultural synonym for desperation. Computer games circumvent this problem by providing both the means to play alone and the illusion of someone to play with—by meeping, blinking, changing, and making moves that at least appear spontaneous.

It's all in the scene at a video-game arcade. Dozens of players (mostly teenagers, who should be out petting or playing softball) hunched over joysticks, fully absorbed in private action. No one talks to anyone else—there's so much bleeping and blasting going on, talking is impossible anyway—and no one pays any attention to what others are doing. The prevailing air is anonymity, not too different from the Times Square peep show where customers slink in, slink out, and try not to be noticed while taking anonymous pleasures.

The next wave of video games will advance this condition from teenagers and college kids to adults. Powerful new game-players like the Atari 5200 make possible cartridges that aren't just spin-and-shoot, but that involve strategy, contemplation, and changing circumstances. The first such adult-oriented video game, Atari's Star Raiders, is already on the market, with other slower, more subtle games on the way. Once video games are complex enough to engage the adult mind, computers will be all the more attractive as an alternative to companions.

Advertising the solitary aspects of computers presents a delicate problem, as does advertising one-portion frozen meals and other products that serve the lonely market. A direct approach obviously cannot be used ("NOW! SOFTWARE FOR LOSERS!"). But the way computer game advertisers have already solved the problem indicates how computer-companion advertisers will solve it in the near future. In contrast, say, to beer commercials, like "Welcome to Miller Time," which shows hale friends in hearty communion, video game advertisements rely on grim man-versus-machine confrontations. A commercial for Atari's 5200 has a single young man, alone, matched against the machine in a featureless enclosure. Mattel Intellivision's advertisements offer George Plimpton declaring, in his Duchy of Grand Fenwick accent, that his games are intellectually superior. The most revealing ad, however, was a Plimpton-Mattel commercial run this Christmas. A photo trick made it appear, a la the old Patty Duke show, that there were three George Plimptons in the same room engaged in earnest conversation with themselves about the virtues of various game cartridges. The context

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was entirely self-centered, as if, through the computer, you could enjoy the company of a group consisting solely of you.

Double-edged Disks

Waiting for adulthood to fall under the computer's spell won't be necessary for the next generation, however. Computers are increasingly a part of the lives of children, as, given their technological importance, they inevitably must be. Many of their effects on children will be welcome. Computers are already helping rekindle the national interest in science and mathematics that helped make the country strong and prosperous but waned with the unleashing of more "relevant" curriculum. Computers make excellent learning tools in some areas because they are nonjudgmental (that is, not like people). Kids can ask computers dumb questions without being tittered at. They can go over the same material as many times as necessary, without the computer becoming tired or testy or anxious to move on to the next subject. In a day when both parents are working and forever racing off to some vital-sounding meeting, sparing only the occasional "quality time" for their children, computers at least can offer quantity time.

But by the same token that computers do not make painful social judgments about children, they can teach nothing about social interaction—about the unpredictable, emotional forces that are essential to life and take so much longer to understand than algebra or European history. There are no bittersweet lessons in the realm of computers, just cause and effect. The kid who plays computer games rather than real games like football won't get laughed at by the other kids if he's too small or slow, won't get hurt, and won't come home all muddy (so lots of middle-class moms may laud this as a positive development). On the other hand, he won't learn anything about getting along with his peers, about handling pressure, about camaraderie and coordinated action. Where will his social skills come from? Owing to a smaller family, the child of the future may not have the experience of brothers or sisters, either. While those who substitute computers for people today may do so as a response to some failure or hurt, children of generations to come may go straight to computers for companionship, never really taking their chances with people at all.

A preview of that culture already exists, in the group now derided as "computer nerds." Computer nerds are the kids who looked funny and didn't fit in during high school, who lost themselves in calculus and physics as an escape, and who came into their glory with the computer revolution. The most celebrated computer nerd, Steve Wozniak, created the Apple I; others have fostered important advances in small computers and video games. While expensive "mainframe" computers and long-term research tend to be in the hands of large corporate teams, it is the nerds, often working alone, who specialize in bringing applied computer technology to the consumer market. The nerds, in other words, are the ones shaping the computers available to the average person, and they are shaping them in their own image—the image of people for whom the personal side of life has often been harsh, and to whom computers, as companions, are a way out.

Yet non-nerds, regular folks who would consider themselves emotionally well-adjusted, comprise the bulk of the computer-buying market. The reason relates, in part, to our educational system. In general, as educational opportunities have expanded, placing college and even graduate school within reach of the many rather than the few, increasing numbers of people have acquired a preference for making life as much like school as possible. It's only natural. If you spend the first 25 years of life in school, being constantly reminded by generous, self-sacrificing parents that school is the only hope of a better tomorrow, when you get to tomorrow you'd like it to be as familiar as possible, and what's familiar is school.

This reflects the tremendous urge of people in my generation to become lawyers, not just because practicing law is financially attractive, but because it's very much like school—writing term papers (briefs) based on library work, being quizzed by professors (judges) on recall of obscure facts, and pretending to care about convoluted theories. It reflects on the present enthusiasm for an "information industry," because a society based on compiling statistics and analyzing reports would make all life like school. And it reflects on the appeal of computers. Computers are a realm in which the mind prevails, where the intellectual faculties my generation has cultivated at such effort and expense can actually be employed. In computers the skills of school—how to study and think—are the skills of success. It's a relief, and more than a little flattering, to finally find an area of life that reveres the brains we always thought we had.

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Meanwhile, the pure-logic side of computers appeals to every person who has developed the mind at the expense of the heart. In computers logic is absolute, unchallengeable; no chance circumstances or inconvenient emotional factors intrude. It is often observed that intellectual prodigies are slow to mature emotionally, because they dedicate themselves to abstract pursuits and are angered, rather than intrigued, by the concrete world and its compromises. With the great college expansion having taught so many to love the abstract and scoff at the real, even those who don't have unusual IQs or artistic gifts may slide into arrested emotional development. Almost anyone who has done well at any level of the now-large educational system, and been lauded by parents or teachers for doing so, is in great danger of mistaking the mental world for the real world. To them, computers have become a necessity—a way to show that academic skills *are* the real world, by going to a place where only brainpower matters.

This sheds light on part of the business community's hunger for computers. Computers obviously are valuable to many companies, and as time passes and computers improve, will become more so. But it's a safe bet that many computers are being bought for businesses that don't really need them or can't justify the cost, and that management-school graduates are to blame. Modern management schools are not all that different from philosophy departments; students are taught to think in terms of models and logic, to admire detached analysis and brainpower more than experience and to toss out any earthly complications that interrupt the flow of theory. When management-school graduates move into the business world, they soon discover a bewildering array of emotional, unpredictable, and just plain illogical forces that their textbooks said they could assume away for the sake of a flawless model. A sales presentation may be quite well-done, for instance, and still not work, even though it "should." So modern managers are more and more willing to retreat to the realms where "should" is the only factor—computers. By computerizing everything in reach the modern business manager can see his logical faculties rewarded and can put off confrontation with the intractable, illogical problems that may be what really need his attention. Similar events are taking place in government, the military, and other fields of life.

Perhaps oddly, even the dropouts of the sixties are making their peace with computers. Peter McWilliams, author of the hot-selling *The Personal Computer Book*, got his start by writing about transcendental meditation. David Sudnow, author of *Pilgrim in the Microworld*, was a sociology teacher at Berkeley during the free-speech days. Computer firms, Susan Chace reported recently in *The Wall Street Journal*, are enjoying substantial sales to counter-culture types. Computers, perhaps, have some appeal here as the first "clean" industrial technology (users don't have to see the smokestacks of the generating stations that provide the computers' power) and because of their ability to expand the mind in a way reminiscent, minus the physical peril, of drugs. The computer is an ethereal world that welcomes creativity—not exactly what Timothy Leary had in mind, but better than nothing. My speculation, however, is that the hippie heart responds to computers mainly in emotional ways. The counter-culture was rejected and misunderstood by the mainstream. With no Woodstock to retreat to, computers that can be programmed to give at least the illusion of understanding will have to do.

The Fido 5200

For the lonely and the overly intellectual of this generation and others to follow, computers could be the main agents of comfort and consolation. All things considered this is not half bad. Computers are safer than drugs or drink; they have worthwhile applications; they're smarter than dogs or parakeets. Yet there is something they can never be, regardless of the level of technological advance. A dog's emotions, though highly simplified compared to ours, are nonetheless *real*. A dog really *cares*; when you're away he misses you and when you're present he feels joy. These emotions are amplified by numbers. The more people who are around, the happier the dog is. People are the same, happiest in the company of family and friends, although it's sometimes harder to detect since people don't display their emotions in the exaggerated style practiced by dogs.

Obviously, on this scale, the most expensive computer finishes way behind a labrador. A computer's reactions aren't real, merely realistic. Maybe for a lost soul, badly hurt by the world and its unreliable occupants, computers are a haven we should not begrudge. But what happens when people start going straight to computers for their companionship, bypassing the danger of hurt but also the hope of transport? ■

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TIDBITS AND OUTRAGES

After Chapter 11, The White Sale

The Invisible Empire, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, has filed for reorganization under federal bankruptcy laws. According to Invisible Empire chief Bill Wilkinson, the move "will not hamper our operations, and, in fact, will make us stronger because it preserves our cash flow and freezes our obligations."

The Case Against The 9-Digit Zip Code

This December, a couple boating off the Georgia Coast encountered difficulties and radioed the Coast Guard for emergency help. By the time the Coast Guard arrived, the boat had capsized in 8- to 10-foot seas and the couple was clinging to a portion of a galley table. The man later told the Atlanta Constitution *the Coast Guard refused to dispatch a boat until "after they spent ten or 15 minutes taking our names, addresses, zip codes, and so on."*

Breaking In With The Joneses

Police in Greenwich, Connecticut, have discovered that burglars there are now using the Social Register in selecting homes to rob.

Boston Has A Reputation For Stiff Fines

From a recent Associated Press story datelined Boston:

"Meter maids ticketed a parked car at least twice while the vehicle's owner was slumped dead over the steering wheel with a puncture wound to his neck, police said today.

" 'The car had been ticketed twice, once at 10:50 a.m. (Tuesday) and once at 2:30 p.m. The door of the car was open and he had the keys to the car in his hand,' said police spokesman Brian McMasters.

"McMasters said police did not know why meter maids had not called in police or why they had ticketed the car without trying to speak to the man inside."

"... And That's Our Final Offer!"

When two college students recently approached the Environmental Protection Agency seeking volunteer, for-credit internships, the agency said it was interested. Though the students' college specifically asks that all internships be unpaid, the EPA insisted that the students agree to accept a wage of more than $5 an hour.

New Suspects In The Deep Throat Case

The New York City Transit Authority recently disclosed that city youths have taken to stealing subway tokens by sucking them from the turnstile slots. Some reportedly make more than $50 a day in this enterprise. Hugh Dunne, a special assistant for the Authority, explained, "Before [customers] can pass through, the kids quickly come with their mouths and suck the token right up." Dunne added, "I frankly couldn't think of anything more downright unhealthy."

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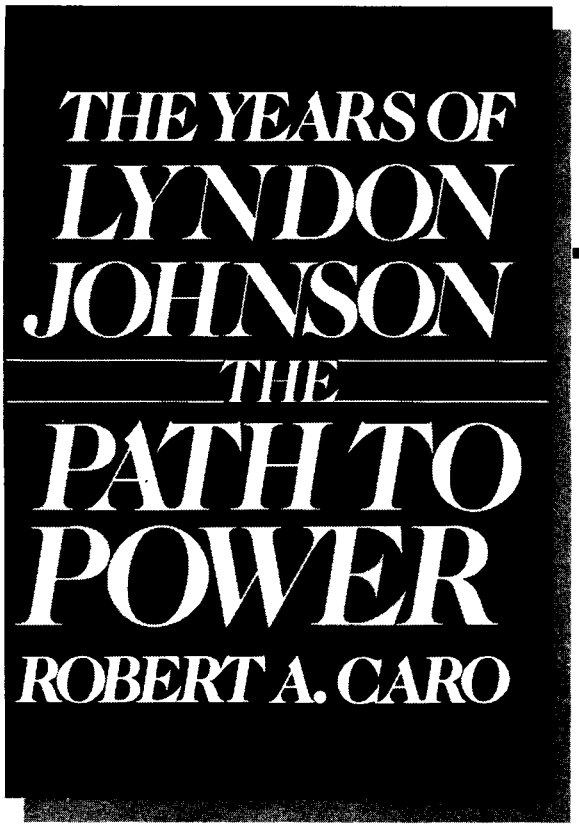

The Path to Power.
Robert Caro. *Knopf.*

·The Washin

13th ANNUAL

The Political Book Award for 1982 goes to *The Path to Power* by Robert Caro and to *The Underclass* by Ken Auletta.

Auletta's book is not discussed in this issue, but was reviewed last summer by Charles Peters in *The New York Times Book Review*:

"The author, a New York journalist, studied job programs run by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, an organization funded by foundations and the federal government. He spent seven months with one group of 26 trainees attending classes designed, in the author's words, 'to instill the habit of work and to expunge bad habits.' He also visited MDRC programs in Mississippi and West Virginia and read widely in the literature of poverty.

"Auletta is admirable in refusing to be

THE NOMINEES

After Daley. Samuel K. Gove, Louis Masotti, eds. *University of Illinois Press.*

America in Search of Itself: The Making of the President 1956-1980. Theodore H. White. *Harper & Row.*

The American Inquisition: American Justice and Injustice in the Cold War. Stanley I. Kutler. *Hill & Wang.*

American Journey. Richard Reeves. *Simon & Schuster.*

America's Old Age Crisis. Stephen Crystal. *Basic Books.*

The Angry West: A Vulnerable Land and Its Future. Richard D. Lamm, Michael McCarthy. *Houghton Mifflin.*

Black Leaders of the Twentieth Century. John Hope Franklin, August Meier, eds. *University of Illinois Press.*

Crisis: The Last Year of the Carter Presidency. Hamilton Jordan. *Putnam.*

The Dragon and the Bear: Inside China & Russia Today. Philip Short. *Houghton Mifflin.*

Ear on Washington. Diana McLellan. *Arbor House.*

The Education of David Stockman and Other Americans. William Greider. *E. P. Dutton.*

Eugene V. Debs. Nick Salvatorre. *University of Illinois Press.*

The Fate of the Earth. Jonathan Schell. *Knopf.*

Global Insecurity: A Strategy for Economic Renewal. Daniel Yergin, Martin Hillenbrand, eds. *Houghton Mifflin.*

Keeping Faith. Jimmy Carter. *Bantam.*

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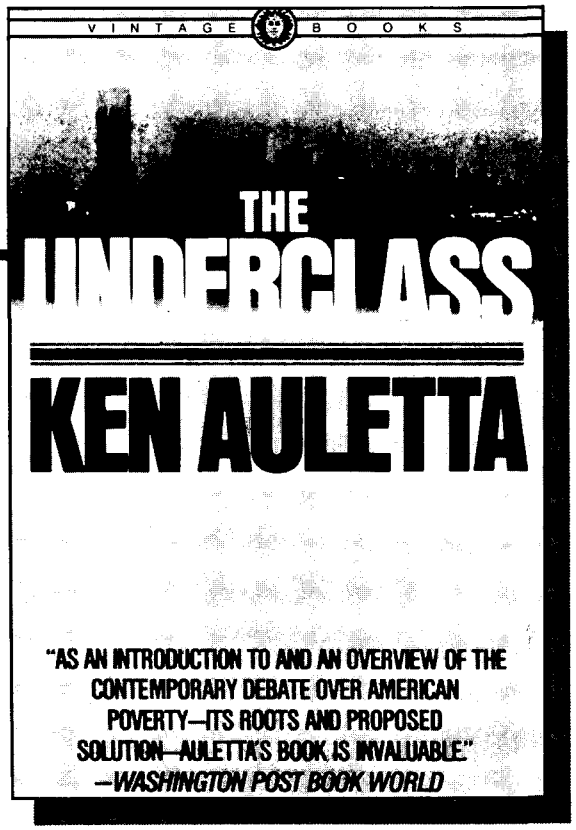
on Monthly·

BOOK AWARDS

limited by the mindlessly anecdotal approach of much popular journalism or blinded by the conventional liberal bias toward poverty ('It's all society's fault'). He combines the interviews—more than 250 in fact—and personal observations that give life to journalism with the scholar's discipline and systematic diligence. His mind is equally open to Oscar Lewis, a liberal anthropologist, and Edward Banfield, a conservative political scientist, though he clearly does not accept the mythology of the extreme right that depicts the underclass as composed entirely of lazy, vicious, oversexed criminals. He sees these people as human beings, real and whole, and his empathy for even the most incorrigible of them is contagious."

The Path to Power is discussed elsewhere in the issue by Nicholas Lemann ("Today's Best Journalism: Better than Fiction," page 24.)



The Underclass.
Ken Auletta. *Random House.*

The Kennedy Imprisonment. Gary Wills. *Atlantic/Little, Brown.*

Media Unbound: The Impact of Television Jounalism on the Public. Stephan Lesher. *Houghton Mifflin.*

None of the Above: Why Presidents Fail—and What Can Be Done About It. Robert Shogan. *NAL Books.*

Pawn of Yalta. Mark R. Elliot. *University of Illinois Press.*

The Political Economics of Aging. Laura Katz Olson. *Columbia University Press.*

The Politics of Park Design. Galen Cranz. *University of Illinois Press.*

The Puzzle Palace: A Report on NSA, America's Most Secret Agency. James Bamford. *Houghton Mifflin.*

The Reagan Experiment. John L. Palmer, Isabel V. Sawhill, eds. *The Urban Institute Press.*

The Real Anti-Semitism in America. Nathan Perlmutter, Ruth Ann Perlmutter. *Arbor House.*

Revolt Against Regulation. Michael Pertschuk. *University of California Press.*

The Rise and Decline of Nations. Mancur Olson. *Yale University Press.*

Spreading the American Dream—American Economic and Cultural Expansion: 1980-1945. Emily S. Rosenberg. *Farrar, Straus & Giroux.*

The Transformation of Wall Street. Joel Seligman. *Houghton Mifflin.*

Water: The Nature, Uses, and Future of Our Most Precious and Abused Resource. Fred Powledge. *Farrar, Straus & Giroux.*

The Years of Upheaval. Henry Kissinger. *Little, Brown.*

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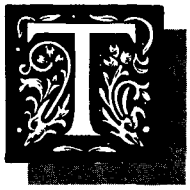
TODAY'S BEST JOURNALISM BETTER THAN FICTION

Nicholas Lemann



The sensation that Allen Drury's *Advise and Consent* caused when it was published in 1959 can be taken as a sign of how hungry the nation was at that moment for some sense of the texture of modern Washington. Today it seems incredible that *Advise and Consent* could have made the earth move—it's terribly dated, a routine procession of silver-maned senators and cynical reporters—but that just shows what a terra incognita its subject matter was. Drury's book had the immediate effect of loosing an avalanche of material—fiction, nonfiction, even movies and television shows—seeking to reveal the soul and the processes of Washington. Just in the fiction division of the sweepstakes, a wide range of talents has entered over the years—national security chillers like Fletcher Knebel (*Seven Days in May* and many other books), literateurs like Willie Morris (*The Last of the Southern Girls*), first-rank novelists like Joseph Heller (*Good as Gold*), even disgraced government officials like John Ehrlichman (*The Company*). There is a vast and forgettable middle range, too, to which every year are added new Washington thriller and love stories, sagas and soap operas, filled with sober presidents, ambitious aides, and crafty spies. Yet most of the whole oeuvre seems wooden and one-dimensional, and the great Washington novel remains an unattained Holy Grail.

I can think of three reasons why. The first is the notion that Washington is glamorous—an idea common among Washingtonians, but one on whose shoals many a Washington novel has foundered. Literary depiction of the high life is difficult to begin with, and because the essence of Washington actually resides in well-educated, blue-suited, upper-middle-class workaholics, it is impossible to explain the workings of government through the depiction of extravagant leisure.

The second problem of Washington novels has to do with how Washingtonians perceive each other. Richly drawn characterization lies at the core of most great fiction, but people in Washington tend to view one's job title as the alpha and omega of the human character. So when a novelist of Washington, wishing to illuminate public affairs, brings on stage a character who is a member of Congress or a White House adviser, everything else about him becomes fuzzy and inconsequential—his family, his history, his deepest secrets. One of the most successful Washington novels of the last decade, Ann Beattie's *Chilly Scenes of Winter*, is populated solely by minor civil servants, never mentions politics, and perhaps as a result brings its characters fully to life.

Finally, as a city of transients, lacking its own small-c culture (Washington-style food, a Washington accent, Washington music, Washington architecture), Washington can't give a novel the depth and pungency of a distinctive setting. Small-time, out-of-the-way corners of the country, like Faulkner's Yoknapatawpah County, Steinbeck's canneries, and Lewis's town of Zenith, are vivid and tangible in the mind of anybody who has read about them. Yet through a hundred novels, Washington as a place remains a blur.

If you were to contemplate these three problems in the abstract, one simple way around at least the first two might present itself: comedy. Does Washington misperceive itself as glamorous? Then hold up for fun-making a set of dull and conventional characters who go through life thinking they're the glitterati. Are Washingtonians title-maniacal? Show them dancing and scheming around their obsession with rank. Such thoughts apparently occurred to two first-time Washington novelists,

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Nicholas Lemann is executive editor of Texas Monthly *and a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly.

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Illustration by Vint Lawrence

Larry McMurtry and Judith Martin. McMurtry is best known as the major chronicler in fiction of Texas's transition from rural to urban, though he has lived in Washington for years. *Cadillac Jack* (Simon & Schuster, $15.95) is his first Washington novel, although it isn't quite fair to call it that; its true genre is the American frontier picaresque, as written in the 19th century by Mark Twain and many lesser talents. Judith Martin is *The Washington Post*'s Miss Manners. *Gilbert* (Atheneum, $14.95) is her first novel, a self-proclaimed comedy of manners roughly in the manner of Evelyn Waugh. If the goal of *Cadillac Jack* and *Gilbert* is to be funny at Washington's expense, they are successful—*Cadillac Jack* more so. If they also are intended to be funny literature, like *Don Quixote*, they are failures, precisely because they are so singlemindedly determined to seat Washington on a whoopee cushion.

A Comedy of Miss Manners

Gilbert is a novel in two parts, the first establishing Gilbert Fairchild as callow, rude, quasi-beatnik lady-killer at Harvard in the fifties, the second bringing him forward to a moment of hollow triumph 15 years later as the right-hand man of a just-elected president. The first half is written in a spirit of pure malice. It is deadly accurate on the air of world-weariness worn by Harvard students and its success at getting Radcliffe students out of their black leotards; Gilbert is wonderfully despisable. But then, when she gets him to Washington, Martin inexplicably softens on Gilbert. She marries him off to a woman so shallow and unpleasant that you can't help feeling sorry for him, and has him go through agonies about his purpose in life. These agonies are utterly lifeless, and not just because she has established Gilbert as nothing more than a little snot. Martin's true passion, which keeps bursting through the seams of the book, is not to explain Gilbert but to show that she's smarter than he is, that she knows exactly what the game is in his world. Digressing into lavish demonstrations of her familiarity with all the right Washington signals is too tempting for her to resist. In one scene, Gilbert's wife, Wanda, engages in a war of one-upmanship with one of Gilbert's old college girlfriends, Erna, who is merely a foreign service wife:

"Erna tried again when she met Wanda Fairchild for lunch. She wore an ankle-length skirt with two Western shirts, one open to reveal the other, and $180 boots; Wanda showed up in a sweater-suit of nubby, natural-color wool, with a knitted beret to match and spectator shoes. Erna ordered a Lillet, instead of a Martini, which was what she usually drank; Wanda asked for Saratoga vichy water. Then Erna got cautious and

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ordered the pike souffle, after Wanda had pointedly recommended it—but Wanda explained to the waiter that she wanted to have a broiled rockfish without any butter used in the cooking, and a fresh lemon with it. When Erna bragged of her husband's career, Wanda pointed out that Gilbert's job threw her into dull company. Erna switched and complained that she was bored with her roles as wife and mother and anxious to find deeper fulfillment; Wanda confided that she loved nothing better than to lounge at home, doing nothing."

While modern fiction writers seem obsessed with their internal landscapes, the best journalists have been out in the field, producing the most memorable stories.

Martin is on the money here, and also very clever, but in a way this works against the success of the novel. How can Gilbert's soul-searching be convincing when it concerns his role in a city where it is not possible for anything of meaning to take place? Martin's Washington is the city at its trendiest and most superficial, a backdrop against which even Hamlet wouldn't have anything worthwhile to agonize over. When in the end Gilbert redeems himself by finding a Serious Issue, one can't imagine that he really believes in it. Only in the last few pages, when Gilbert begins scheming like in the old days (in service of the Serious Issue, of course), does he reemerge from the fog. Martin has established her credentials as an in-the-know observer at the expense of Gilbert's establishing his as a grown-up.

The sins of *Cadillac Jack* in portraying Washington are easier to forgive because it is clearly McMurtry's intention to use Washington as a foil rather than to get inside it. "Well, this town'll get you down, if you ain't used to it," he has one of the legion of irresistible coots who populate the book say, speaking also, I suspect, for the author. "It's fine for spies and newspapermen, but it ain't everybody's cup of tea." A little later, and a little more seriously, the same fellow expands on the theme: "Now you take Washington. It's old. People in old places get picky. They run out of energy so they make do with taste, which is not so good a thing." Washington in *Cadillac Jack* is meant to be what St. Petersburg, Missouri, was in *Huckleberry Finn*; it's the stifling, overcivilized base camp from which its hero, Jack McGriff, a former rodeo star and professional antique scout, ventures forth periodically to have comic misadventures, fall in love, and find himself.

Up to a point, McMurtry is quite good at lampooning Washington—really two Washingtons. The first is high-Georgetown society, a world of stuffed shirts and predators (Spud Breyfogle, Cunard Cotswinkle, John C.V. Ponsonby, and others similarly named) that it would be difficult to take less seriously than McMurtry does. "I don't suppose anyone here has read my Monday column, have they?" a self-adulatory journalist asks the assembled guests at one dinner party. "*So* hard to tell them apart," complains the Margaret Dumont-ish hostess.

The second Washington is the fantastically gray world of the bureaucracy, which, if this is possible, McMurtry loves even less. The cafeteria of the Department of Transportation sends Cadillac Jack into a near frenzy: "Pretty soon I was following a stream of people which was pouring down into the basement of the building, toward the cafeteria. The stream was not exactly meandering aimlessly, either. I felt like I had wandered into an ant colony, or perhaps a beetle colony. The people around me had an insect-like quality, though it would have been hard to name the insect they suggested. Wood lice probably."

These are send-ups to be savored, but they could have been more than that. In *Huckleberry Finn*, the figures of civilization and pretense—Aunt Sally, Tom Sawyer, even the Duke and Dauphin—are presented in a way that makes you understand and love them without any sacrificing of laughs; Twain's empathetic power is large enough to get him within the rhythms of the antebellum Mississippi Valley petit bourgeoisie while producing a novel of escape from them. Granting McMurtry that he didn't set out to write a novel about public policy formulation, he spends enough time on his Washington characters that a similar degree of empathy, applied to *Cadillac Jack*, could not have helped but produce

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a fuller understanding of government. A brief scene in Texas, which he loves, is very funny, but also illuminating of the feel of the late oil age in the barren reaches of ranching country, where rich kids devote their lives to drugs and TV-reception satellite dishes. The Washington scenes are very funny, too, but McMurtry's guard is always up.

Just's Desserts

The failings of *Gilbert* and *Cadillac Jack* suggest that taking Washington seriously has more to recommend it than would at first be apparent. The fallacy of Washington's glamour could be avoided by populating a Washington novel with somber folks; the problem of characterization-via-title could be handled through deep and concerted empathy of the sort that *Gilbert* and *Cadillac Jack* lack. In his latest novel, *In the City of Fear* (Viking, $14.95), Ward Just takes that approach, as he has throughout his career. In the last ten years Just has done the best job of getting Washington down in fiction, producing a body of work that could be described as Allen Drury for grown-ups: he presents the middle- and upper-middle-level people who actually make government function, and makes vivid the way they go about their lives and their work. *In the City of Fear* is in this vein and is vastly serious, a complicated examination of why the Washington establishment was drawn into the war in Vietnam and how the war tore the establishment forever asunder. Ernest Hemingway's favorite chords—battle, manhood, death, doomed love—boom loudly in the background.

Certainly, Just is successfully empathetic. Other than a president who sits through his scene like a lump of dough, his title too overwhelming to allow for characterization, every figure in *In The City of Fear* is deep: a Midwestern congressman and his wife, a rising Army officer, a CIA man, the foreign editor of a newspaper, and on the fringes a White House aide and a fixer-lawyer. In fact, if there's a problem with the characters as believable people, it's that they're *too* deep. In conversation they quote Clausewitz and Stendhal; the quotidian details of life never impinge on them. In one nice scene, the host at a dinner party sends his maid out to negotiate the mine-strewn bus ride home to Southeast Washington—he can't give her a ride, foreign policy is being discussed. Just doesn't give his characters many tweaks like that, though. While he conveys their self-regard, he buys the justice of it, too. Here he is describing the kind of living room his heroes—you'll see the word is used advisedly—inhabit:

"This is a room whose occupant is at ease with conflict and discord, Marx touching Mark Twain; a Baedeker between *The History of the Jews*, volumes I and II; the diaries of Ickes, Forrestal, and Virginia Woolf; the memoirs of U.S. Grant, Sherman Adams, George Kennan, and Nan Britton; the parliamentary novels of Anthony Trollope and the Dreiser canon. . . . There are books from floor to ceiling, on coffee tables, framing fireplaces, obscured by ferns and screens. Unoccupied, the room looks somehow restored, as properly historical as the morning rooms at Mount Vernon or Monticello. It is redolent of history, though the newspaper on the hassock and the television set in the corner remind the passerby that this Washingtonian is not an academic or a scholar, remote from the common culture. This is the room of a native, not a businessman in from Chicago for a tour as secretary of commerce or an academic down from Cambridge for a spell with the National Security Council."

God meant Just to be a short-story writer, not a novelist. *In the City of Fear* contains three or four first-rate short stories, including one about a political deal struck over a morning's duck hunting that is fully in the league of the Nick Adams stories. But as a novel it's hopelessly overcomplicated in structure. The last scene shows his characters, circa 1962, mourning the death of a friend—they are grieving, but are also cocky, self-confident, captivated by the sex appeal of Camelot, and just beginning to be touched by Vietnam. The *first* scene shows them in the early seventies, with the war in its final stages and their own camaraderie shattered. The heart of the book is a description of a Washington dinner party, in perhaps 1967, that goes on for 213 pages, replete with interlocking flashbacks. It captures one of the last moments at which there were still hawks and doves in respectable Washington, and the sense of mixed hubris and desperation behind the war effort is nicely drawn. Even the hawks are well aware that it isn't their kids who are dying in Southeast Asia; even the doves object to the war only on practical grounds (that is, its unwinnability), never ideological ones.

Woven into the book are moments here and there that capture some nuances of Washington life perfectly: the officer's ancient and powerful father's ruminations on why the younger genera-

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tion is losing the war ("The sons had not wanted it badly enough. . . . They'd lost their nerve. . . "), a Midwestern businessman's Taftish contempt for the New Frontier ("Washington was where you were summoned to *serve*, not an end in itself, not a place to which a businessman aspired as a matter of ambition, but a place he submitted to as a matter of patriotism"). Every note like this makes one's now-I-understand-Washington geiger counter click and rattle in a way that it never does in *Gilbert* and *Cadillac Jack*.

Yet there is a persistent feeling of vagueness, of missed connections, in *In the City of Fear*. In part it's a technical problem—the flashbacks keep one's full understanding always a shade out of reach—but it also stems from Just's lack of distance from the Washington he is writing about. Read the passage describing the Georgetown living room again, and you'll see that there exists in Washington an extremely sophisticated form of Babbitry, in which smugness, self-satisfaction, and boosterism lurk just underneath the lovely veneer. Just somehow floats around the edges of this state of mind, never quite successfully outside it. He wants to brag about his characters, to be kind to them, to believe that their vision of themselves is essentially true. He permits their prejudices to set limits on his power and range as an artist—you can't imagine Just creating a believable fiery ideologue to go with his gallery of super-intelligent pros, who are committed above all to playing the game.

More specifically, by tying himself to the perceptions of his characters, Just also ties himself to Washington's lack of a clear sense of what difference all the high talk of policy makes. At one point in *In the City of Fear* the endless dinner party discussion turns to the subject of a reporter, and the CIA man says, "Connoisseur of losing battles, he's like a wine snob at a fancy tasting. Algeria and the Congo, good nose, thin body; Korea, no character; Cyprus, no finesse. World War II, the European theater of course, the Haut Brion of wars, even though we didn't lose it. But Indochina, *voila!* Superb! Best in a generation!" Leaving aside the pretentious talk, what is striking is its complete, almost theological abstraction. What about what is actually going on in the war? Does the CIA man care? Does the reporter? Or is the assumption of the proper attitude—chosen in the spirit of wine snobbery—all that matters?

Just clearly knows that it isn't, but he has no way of showing that he knows. As in a drawing room comedy, the action takes place offstage, so there is never a kicker in which the consequences of the theories the brilliant men and women of Washington are constantly spinning out come clear. I longed for Just to follow the officer to Vietnam to see him carrying out the new policy hatched in the course of the novel; instead, we see him briefly on his return, his mind half gone, but we don't know what happened to him, what the fatal flaw in the policy was. Maybe to be truly successful a Washington novel has to venture outside of Washington.

The best Washington novel published last year, to my mind, was Robert Caro's *The Path to Power* (Knopf, $19.95), and I say this not as a dig at its veracity but as praise. With the by-now-ritual caveat that the book has its problems—it is overwrought, it stretches its reporting too far in places, it presents its main subject too simply as a schemer—it does what a good novel should do. Its characters are richly detailed from birth (and sometimes before), with an eye to revealing the obscure hurts and dreams that propel them through life. Its settings, Washington and Texas, linger in the reader's mind as memorable, sweaty places. Through his mania for accumulating small facts and for following strings of events to wherever they end, Caro also has made it clear how politics and government work.

Robert Caro's "The Path to Power" shows more insight into political culture than the best Washington novels.

When a dam is built or an electric line strung, Caro finds out everything: the theory behind it, the lobbying and politicking required to make it happen, and then—what most Washington novels never tell you—how the thing was actually done and how it changed the world. Caro's desire to impress is confined to demonstrating his perspicacity as a reporter. He isn't out to prove that the world of politics is glamorous—if anything, he is out to prove the opposite. His research solves the difficulties of presenting Washington as a

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place, by making it possible for him to show how politics flows upward to Washington from other places and then flows back out again.

If any chapter deserves singling out, it's the one on Sam Rayburn, whom a generation of reporters found irresistible to portray as just another Southern politician. Here he is an iron-willed, uncorruptible populist, desperately poor as a boy, desperately lonely as a man, used expertly by Lyndon Johnson. The passion that Caro brings to Rayburn is solely to explain him, to make him live, and to provide a context for understanding his political career. Caro does it so well that, purely from a literary standpoint, you feel that if Rayburn had ended up as just another congressman instead of the speaker of the House, he would have been no less interesting a man. In Washington, that's the ultimate compliment.

In a way, a book like *The Path to Power*—and other memorable works of nonfiction, like David Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest* and Tom Wolfe's *The Right Stuff*—represents a coming full circle from the days of *Advise and Consent*. In the fifties, and for years before that, journalists felt they had to turn to fiction in order to tell what they knew from experience to be the real truth about the political world. In nonfiction it would be impossible to get down the moments in which all is revealed, because government officials would never let a reporter witness them firsthand; and anyway, there was the enormous weight of journalistic convention resting solidly in the path of such material actually being published. One of the many journalists whose work gave no hint that the material that made *Advise and Consent* a hit existed was Allen Drury himself, in the long period that he covered Capitol Hill for *The New York Times*.

With Theodore White's *The Making of the President 1960*, that began to change. He proved not only that a reporter could get the material necessary to write nonfiction with character, scenes, and even snatches of dialogue (how did he get in the room with Kennedy, everyone wanted to know), but also that such work could attract a large and respectable audience (remember, *The Making of the President* was published by a tiny, newborn book-publishing house, and everyone involved expected it to sink without a trace). In the ensuing years reporters began to steal more and more from novelists in terms of technique, and to venture more and more into places where journalists had never tread in order to get the necessary raw material. When they were able to bring to bear on their research the rich forms of exposition that had previously been the exclusive province of fiction writers, the resulting work could raise readers' interest in and understanding of the workings of government to a new level.

Meanwhile, the novelists were most assuredly *not* stealing from the reporters. Read *The Grapes of Wrath* or *U.S.A* and you know that they could not have been anything but the product of extensive travel and research by the author; but with the passing years, American novelists began to get out and about less. After World War II came the absolute enshrinement of American modernism, with its emphasis on the writer's internal landscape, and the boom in higher education, with its bounty in jobs for novelists on university payrolls. These forces neatly dovetailed to get fiction writers out of touch with the rest of the world. Whereas Charles Dickens in his day used to take well-publicized research trips before embarking on a new novel, in postwar America actual reporting was the province only of novelists like Arthur Haley and James Michener who were completely unrespectable in literary circles. Literary art had to go through the washing machine of the artist's experience and then the dryer of his subconscious. Even the rare respectable novelist who made enough money to finance research spent it instead on a house on Cape Cod—goodby, creative writing class—and kept on delving into the well-mined adolescent years for his material, or perhaps tackled the agonies of literary fame. So the best novelists were limited for subject matter to the things that happened to have happened to them. They couldn't—didn't, anyway—apply their gifts of narrative and empathy to experiences outside their own. A reporter with the same skills, on the other hand, could enrich his understanding pretty much at will, in any area he deemed important.

That's the great gulf that separates Caro from the best annual crop of Washington novels in quite a while. Caro knows where his anti-hero came from because, in the course of seven years of research, he went and lived there; he knows what consequences followed upon Lyndon Johnson's machinations in Washington because he ran them down. For a novelist, that's against the rules—stupid rules, but most novelists today seem to follow them. As long as they do, the fullest portraits of the political world will continue to come from journalists, and fiction will present a version of politics that is as incomplete as a sentence that consists only of a verb, with no subject and no object. ■

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HARVARD vs. DEMOCRACY

Jonathan Alter

Readers of *The Boston Globe* awoke one morning in 1981 to a peculiarly revealing story about Harvard. It seems that administrators at the John F. Kennedy School of Government were contemplating a name change to bring the school into conformity with Harvard Law School and Harvard Business School, whose professional cachet they envied and whose fund raising was not hampered by association with a political family out of fashion and unloved by many potential conservative benefactors. The new name reportedly was to be simple and politically neutral: the Harvard School of Government.

The mayor of Cambridge, a salty, Italian politician with little taste for hasty pudding, was so dismayed by the matter that he succeeded in changing the name of the street where the school sits from Boylston Street to Kennedy Street, which meant the school would have to put JFK's name on its stationery whether it wanted to or not. If the mayor was unable to fulfill his hopes of changing Harvard Square to Kennedy Square, the idea of replacing the school's name never surfaced again, and Harvard administrators now pretend the whole thing was a bad dream.

The reason the incident sticks in my mind is not so much for its ham-handedness (though it surely was that), but for what it says about Harvard's approach to the real world of politics. There is some confusion at the university over what is political and value-laden; on the one hand, and what is "objective," "neutral," and "professional," on the other, and the confusion takes on importance because the Kennedy School is considered these days to be a Triple-A farm club for the special assistants and professors-turned-policy-makers who run so much of Washington.

When the new Kennedy School building was dedicated in 1978, Harvard President Derek Bok said that what was at stake was nothing less than the creation of a "new profession." The absence of a public policy profession, he added, was "the principal missing link in American higher education today." Bok's aim is a school that will benefit government the way business school has . . . uh . . . benefited American business.

Bok's 1982 book, *Beyond the Ivory Tower: Social Responsibilities of a Modern University* (Harvard University Press, $15.95), does not deal directly with his dream for a new profession of Kennedy School-trained officials; it is instead an abstract, workmanlike (to put it gently) legal brief in defense of running universities in a nonpolitical way. Bok's desultory thesis is that the doctrine of institutional neutrality, which he has long used as a way of boring anti-South Africa activists into apathy, is an imperfect but essential approach in all cases except those involving academic freedom and the health of the university. He approvingly quotes the late Fritz Machlup, the Princeton professor who said, "The institution or its faculty as a body has no brain and no heart, and should have no mouth either. . . ." Universities, Bok writes, should lobby for higher funding for themselves, but never on political issues (short of Nazism).

As for college presidents, Bok believes they should confine themselves to subjects on which "they could claim to have considerable knowledge and expertise." This sets him quite apart from great Harvard presidents of the past (Charles Eliot was one of Grover Cleveland's biggest supporters), but it is not atypical of the antiseptic, eunuch-like behavior that now passes for a sense of responsibility at major institutions. Bok is scornful of faculty and student petitions on political

Jonathan Alter is an editor of The Washington Monthly.

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subjects: "Many votes are cast and much debate carried on by people having no special knowledge of the subject involved."

Special knowledge. This was the specific message of Bok's speech at the dedication of the new Kennedy School building and it has been a major message of his presidency. The *real* problem with government, the *real* reason nothing seems to work out anymore, he said in that speech, has little to do with lack of leadership or anything so crass as ideology. To his mind, the issue is simply "excellence in government." The excellence is meant, of course, to be *neutral* excellence, and, indeed, the theme of Bok's book reaches its apotheosis in the Kennedy School, which confidently believes that the world would be a better place if it were run by experts—generalized experts (as opposed to engineering or economics Ph.D.s), but experts all the same.

If you were expecting a little more skepticism and humility on this point after the experience of the last 20 years, you were expecting too much. The pitch now is that the most important reason the best and the brightest failed was not that they took the tools of quantifiable systems analysis (the intellectual descendant of which now makes up much of the Kennedy School curriculum) and used them to measure the Vietnam War's progress through McNamara's "body counts" and the like, not that they fell prey to what historians call the "arrogance of power," not that braininess has its limitations. No, the reason Harvard faculty and alumni failed when they went to Washington in the 1960s, Bok wrote in his 1973-74 annual report outlining his dream for a new profession of public service, was that they were trained as lawyers, businessmen, and academics—not as public servants. Amateurs, he called them. In other words (and this is very clear from Bok's writing), the problem was that they weren't best-and-brightest *enough.*

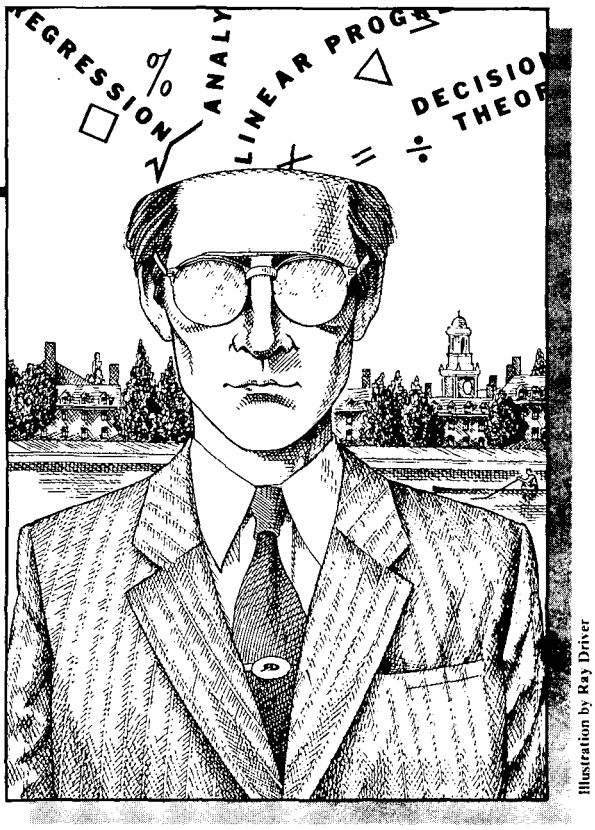

Illustration by Ray Driver

Kennedy School Imprisonment

So the assumption is that there is a "right" way to run the government—not politically, but scientifically—and a sloppy way. The Kennedy School aims to teach the former, with an emphasis on rigorous, disciplined thinking. The special knowledge imparted is less about the substance of government—energy, foreign policy, fiscal policy—than about how to use specific analytical tools to solve problems. There are several programs at the Kennedy School, but all include a large measure of courses covering the application of statistics, econometrics, and microeconomics. Building mathematical models to analyze case studies is a favored technique. One professor summed up the aim of the public policy program as to turn out people who can approach public issues (either from inside the government or out) in a "neutrally competent" way.

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If you were looking around for someone who embodies the Kennedy School, the man you might choose (though he didn't actually go there) is Frank Carlucci. Well-spoken, good with numbers, nonpolitical—so what if he moved effortlessly from Jimmy Carter's CIA to Caspar Weinberger's Pentagon, acquiring along the way an entirely new view of the "threat" and how many hundreds of billions of dollars are needed to counter it? Crisp staff members who will do the boss's bidding is what the Kennedy School believes the government needs more of right now. The implication is that what needs fixing is not so much the decisions themselves as their execution.

This means that despite the presence of something called the Institute of Politics (which caters almost exclusively to undergraduates), government and politics are often viewed in very separate terms at the school. According to several students with whom I spoke, election day last November was no more remarkable an occasion at the Kennedy School than it would be at, say, Harvard Medical School. Mayor Daley's old maxim that good government is good politics is hardly the operative principle of the Kennedy School, or any public policy school for that matter. It's difficult to imagine, for instance, Lyndon Johnson attending the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas. Bringing electrification to the Texas hill country didn't have much to do with decision theory and regression analysis.

I don't mean to condemn altogether the idea of quantitative analytical tools for understanding and evaluating government programs. Government is so Byzantine nowadays that grasping the complexities of budgets or distributional networks or regulatory policy is useful in performing middle- and upper-middle-level bureaucratic functions. The methods can help bureaucrats determine, say, the most efficient form of energy conservation for a small city, or how to assure that a factory meets air-quality standards. Most of all, as Bok wrote in 1973 in his blueprint for a new Kennedy School curriculum, the analytical tools can help government officials "avoid becoming captive to elaborate staff studies [they] can't comprehend."

You have to wonder, though, whether the Kennedy School is turning out the well-informed government official who knows how to escape being captured by engineers, economists, and other experts—or turning out the bamboozling government staff member himself. Does Derek Bok dare learn the answer? One student now at the school remembers several budget preparation exercises where not enough information was presented to the class to make an informed decision. Why couldn't they get more complete figures, several students asked. The professor replied that in the "real world" this was all the information they might get. "The point of the exercise," the student recalls, "was to teach you to fudge with numbers, to obfuscate the fact that you don't really have any more expertise than anyone else."

That kind of thinking isn't just disconcerting, you'd have to say it represents a fundamental flaw in the whole Kennedy School approach. For public policy decisions to parade for even a moment as science is a frightening business, as readers of *The Atlantic* found out in William Greider's story about David Stockman. Could there be a better example of number-crunching manipulation than the preposterous Reagan budget projections of 1981?

The point of the exercise, one Kennedy School student recalls, was "to teach you how to fudge with numbers."

In a school where economists and political scientists hold sway, the inclination to quantify the unquantifiable becomes hard to resist. Consider a Kennedy School course on decision theory that recently studied that most scintillating and inspiring of all public issues, the Law of the Sea Conference. The issue of the case study was whether rights of navigable passage or rights

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to mine the sea beds were of greater interest to the U.S. when it went to the bargaining table. No matter that national security, international goodwill and other concerns are impossible to put a number value on—the assignment was to design an equation revealing which of the two options contained the most "utility points."

The truth is that all uses of numbers contain assumptions, and in all realms of government, civil service or political, those assumptions are by definition *normative*, to use a favorite academic fuzzword. The "neutrally competent" lists of policy options made up by the special assistant always reflect value judgments. So you should ignore, for instance, what conservatives at the Kennedy School and elsewhere try to claim about dispassionate analysis of federal regulation. When the Reagan administration set about scientifically applying cost-benefit analysis in 1981 it was hardly a coincidence that the computers found almost no benefits.

Bok's Bay of Pigs

Fortunately, the Kennedy School tries to teach people to understand some of this. Much of its curriculum, in fact much of public policy education elsewhere, grows out of a 1971 book by Graham Allison called *Essence of Decision*. Allison, now dean of the Kennedy School, used the Cuban missile crisis as a case study to show that decisions are not made by "rational actors" squaring off over a chessboard, but by human beings buffeted by complex bureaucratic and political forces.

That view might not seem so earthshaking a revelation now, but it was to public policy educators of the early seventies. Allison was immortalized because he made the human point while using the comfortable model-building methodology social scientists are accustomed to. What's curious about his book is that this focus on human behavior -and more particularly, on the personal, nonprofessional nature of the missile crisis—is at odds not only with Allison's clunky theorizing, but with the scientific, professional style of public policy education that his work helped spawn.

In spelling out the details of the missile crisis, Allison brought to light a remarkable fact overlooked during most of the sixties. Instead of the unremitting tough guy of lore, Jack Kennedy was in fact a conciliatory negotiator (a truth that

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might have spared us Vietnam policy makers who later emulated what they thought was his machismo example). He sent his brother Bobby to a secret meeting with Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin in an effort to allow Khrushchev to save at least a little face—a move that showed the Kennedys understood something important about human motivations. Allison also points out a better-known fact: the president sought to cut through the professionalized chain of command by creating an ad hoc "Executive Committee" to confront the crisis. The normal rules of government decision making (the kind you might learn, say, in school) suddenly didn't apply. What's more, throughout the deliberations, Bobby played a most un-normal role in government—that of skeptic. He asked simple questions that cut through the Pentagon's elaborate technical rationalizations for an air strike against Cuba.

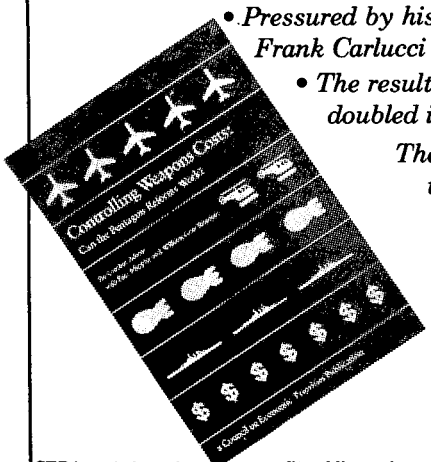
Remember, Bobby Kennedy, then attorney general, was a *non-expert* skeptic—he didn't have any of Derek Bok's "specialized knowledge." He hadn't learned the coefficients of global conflict. Because it was 1962, computerized game theory wasn't available, and, anyway, it would have been a little hard to program Khrushchev's temperament. Allison's equation for describing that very crisis ("the best explanation of an organization's behavior at T is T plus 1") wouldn't have helped him understand the Pentagon. Bobby would have laughed.

The reason the Kennedy brothers didn't care about the skills the Kennedy School would in later years supply was that in 1961, in a similar crisis that didn't involve Bobby Kennedy, the specialized knowledge and model building of Allen Dulles's Ivy League planners at the CIA brought on a very unpleasant result. During that operation nobody asked the tough questions about the assumption behind the invasion projections, nobody challenged the chain of command, and that meant nobody knew to say no when a small band of exiles set out that spring for the Bay of Pigs.

The Human Factor

So the people who run the Kennedy School are in a contorted position. They know abstractly that the government is run by humans who respond to political and bureaucratic stimuli that defy science. But because most of the professors' academic orientation is quantitative, and because the ideal of neutral competence is easier to understand in economic than in cultural terms, they downplay the humanistic areas. When I was at Harvard College I took a very good class at the Kennedy School called The Uses of History. But like other "soft" courses (on the relationship between government and the press, for instance), it is considered by students to be icing on the cake. The softer classes are often scheduled only as three-week sessions between semesters, and when the qualitative issues do get discussed, it is usually in terms rigorous (read stiffly academic)

What Happened To The Carlucci Initiatives?



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enough to squeeze out most of the intangibles.

This is too bad, because the only way the numbers and models will ever make any real sense is if policy makers fully understand the human forces that distort them. Understanding how people think and feel strikes the economists (and even the political scientists) as flaccid, but it's at least as important in government as anything they conjure up.

In recent years there have been a lot of good books about the human dimension of government. Start with David Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest*, which you could safely bet most Kennedy School students haven't read. Add Greider on Stockman. For how the chain of command and other bureaucratic forces prevented the truth about Vietnam from getting out, there's Chester Cooper's *The Lost Crusade*, the *Peers Report* on My Lai, Frank Snepp's *Decent Interval* (about the CIA), and an especially insightful article in the April 1968 *Atlantic* by James C. Thomson, Jr. The sycophantic culture of the White House is best captured in John Dean's *Blind Ambition*; the peculiarities of the judiciary (and state legislature) in Richard Neely's *How Courts Govern America*. (Franz Kafka's *The Trial* is an important reminder that the bureaucracy that benefits you probably hurts someone else.) For a perspective on local government, Ken Auletta's *The Streets Were Paved with Gold* explains how liberal assumptions brought New York to the brink of financial ruin, and T. Harry Williams's *Huey Long* shows how the force of one man's personality can shape a regional culture. Robert Caro's works on Robert Moses (*The Power Broker*) and Lyndon Johnson (*The Path to Power*) are two impressive guidebooks to actually getting things done—good and bad—through government.

It's hard to overstress how important the human understanding revealed in these and other books can be to making government work better. Caring about the anthropological dimension—the "soft" stuff—translates into a commitment for change much more quickly than does caring in your heart of hearts about the models. Real commitment usually implies real curiosity about whether one's vision is being carried out, and curiosity in turn requires that you step away from the computer terminal long enough to get out into the other offices and neighborhoods and talk to people, not to mention read books by people who have done so.

One reason the Kennedy School has been inept

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at teaching students to go out and use their powers of observation to discover how programs really work is that the public policy literature on this subject is so limited. The real-life examples that could allow government managers to grasp that essential human understanding just aren't there in most of the reading assigned. In a good book with the unfortunate title of *Administrative Feedback*, Herbert Kaufman writes under a chapter entitled "Paucity of Data": "Aside from these scattered, diverse materials, we could find nothing analyzing or even describing actual experience with administrative feedback in live organizations."

In the hands of Derek Bok's Harvard, the democratic promise and the meritocratic promise become one and the same.

Notice how Kaufman places the art of description ("even describing") in a category subordinate to analysis. If the great failing of American journalists is that they need to match their talent for description with better analysis, the great failing of political scientists is that they fail to match technical analysis with lively description—in other words, empathy with character and culture. This gaping hole in our understanding of government at the delivery end is beginning to be filled—Ken Auletta's examination of a job-training program in *The Underclass* is a current example—but it is being filled largely by journalists, historians, and novelists, not public policy experts.

Bowled Over by Pros

If books from these disciplines sound like they could just as easily be read in high school or college, you're right. Despite what Derek Bok says, much that is valuable for understanding and working in government is not a professional mystery at all. The reason so many students view Kennedy School courses covering "soft" areas as useless is that they have been conditioned to think of the skills they take home with their diploma as something special. If it were revealed that much of what they really need is in fact accessible to anyone, they wouldn't enroll and the professional school wouldn't exist. This urge to be special is the propped-up foundation on which American professional education has always rested.

In his inimitably elitist way, Bok understands that point. He writes in *Beyond the Ivory Tower* that research universities should not be involved in "schools of hotel management. . . radio and TV communications. . . home economics. . . textiles and clothing. . . and other doubtful enterprises too numerous to mention." The reason he considers them doubtful, unless he truly hates middle-class people, is that competence in these fields can quite easily be obtained without an advanced degree. Building a science around hotel management and then making it difficult to get a job in that field unless you have mastered that science is in no one's interest except the credentialed hoteliers. Barriers of entry to a profession hurt everyone except those inside the barriers.

But despite lawyers who won't let people resolve their own problems, doctors who boycott nurse midwives, and career bureaucrats who are sure they know more about regulating small business than a small businessman ever could, Bok doesn't believe his view of hotel management could possibly be relevant to what he calls the "great" professions. He's wrong. With the idea of public policy education having spread to more than 200 campuses, the normal logic of professional growth will soon apply. School-taught skills will eventually be assigned more weight than experience or other qualifications (like first-hand familiarity with the area of concern). Some day the public sector could be so professionalized that it will lose touch altogether with the people it is supposed to represent. Public policy degrees could complete the traditional professional transformation from something that may help you do a good job into something that is a requirement for getting the job in the first place.

Any movement in that direction (and there's already been some) must be viewed as frighteningly anti-democratic. It's bad enough to be doctored and lawyered by a priesthood; to be ruled by one would mean the end of a very old and very central strain of American democracy.

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For 200 years, representative government has drawn its strength from diversity, and from the idea that the shape of the nation lies in the hands of all citizens, not just those of proper pedigree—hereditary, academic, or otherwise.

Mistaken Identity

Not surprisingly, the priesthood that has long been a source of legitimate resentment on the part of the rest of the country is a source of pride at Harvard. In the 1982-83 Kennedy School bulletin, Elliot Richardson engages in the usual alumni puffery ("Harvard is as old as antiquity and as new as tomorrow's Nobel Prize-winning discovery"), but he also waxes off onto an entirely different plane: "What Harvard stands for is more important to me than what it is or what it has done. Harvard for me is John Winthrop's city upon a hill; the eyes of all people are upon it."

In that one bit of chauvinistic fluff, Richardson put his finger right on the justification not only for the Kennedy School, but for the whole honeycombed system of meritocratic professionalism that Harvard symbolizes. The real city on a hill John Winthrop saw when he sailed into Massachusetts Bay, the real New Jerusalem, was, of course, America itself. But here in the hands of Harvard the democratic promise of the New World and the meritocratic promise of professionalism become one and the same. Harvard doesn't hate America, it mistakes itself for it. Thus Derek Bok could propose last year that colleges should make financial aid decisions solely on the basis of SAT scores—how else should it be? The credentials say it all. In the America of his dreams, anyone can grow up to be president, but he'll be a better president if Harvard screens him first.

Luckily, the real greatness of the American democratic system always seems to poke its head through at appropriate moments. When the idea of dropping the name Kennedy from the school was raised in 1981, all of the models and specialized knowledge in the world could not have told Graham Allison and the other administrators just how unpopular the idea would be. The only way they could have known was to venture far enough beyond the ivory tower to learn of the bond that connected the people of Cambridge, Massachusetts, to John F. Kennedy—and to apply some human, political judgments all citizens should know how to make. But of course they didn't have to go to Harvard to learn that. ■

THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY

Journalism Award

for December 1982 is presented to

Elizabeth Drew
The New Yorker

Drew's thorough and alarming account of the growing influence of money in political campaigns is one of her best reports in recent years. In addition to demonstrating how the quest for PAC funds changes the behavior of politicians in unsettling ways, she offers several sensible ideas for reforming the current system of political financing.

Bruce Ingersoll
Chicago Sun-Times

Much has been written about the nation's decaying "infrastructure" but Ingersoll's series is perhaps the best yet on how badly we've neglected roads, bridges, dams, sewers, and waterways. Though the series is thorough it does not lose its critical eye; the account of one refurbished waterway that cost $170 million but benefits only one coal company is an excellent case study of why not everything done in the name of "infrastructure" is in the public's best interests.

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WHERE MARXISTS GO RIGHT

Robert M. Kaus

"Liberalism is the enemy." That was the slogan I treasured as a college semi-revolutionary who spent most of his academic career reading Marx (well, at least taking courses where I was assigned Marx). In the Marxist tradition, my comrades and I cultivated a biting irony that turned the arguments of our opponents on their heads. Democrats defended the welfare state. Republicans said it might destroy work incentives and undermine capitalism. We agreed with the Republicans, adding only "the sooner the better." Liberals thought you could end the war in Vietnam through a negotiated settlement. Hawks said deescalation would mean a Communist victory. We agreed with the hawks—victory to the NLF! As passengers on the *Titanic*, we nodded at the dire warnings from the conservatives, ridiculed the liberals' deck-chair fiddling, and settled back on our favorite stool by the bar to enjoy the proceedings.

Back then, the hippest Marxists had given up on the idea that capitalism was going to collapse dramatically in another depression. Only a few sour sects went around mumbling about the Labor Theory of Value, the Law of the Declining Rate of Profit, or the Increasing Organic Composition of Capital—all those equations that made *Das Kapital* such tough sledding. Two decades of unprecedented prosperity had shown that capitalism could "deliver the goods," we thought. Where capitalism would fail ("break down") was in its inability to end "alienation"—to provide meaningful work, offer democratic participation in management, and nurture the bonds of community.

A decade later, with the economy in a shambles and most Americans grateful to have work, alienated or not, it's beginning to look like the neo-Marxists of the sixties gave capitalism too much credit. Now, three of the smartest of the radical economists have come up with a new theory of capitalism's collapse that focuses much more closely on the traditional evils of economic stagnation. *Beyond the Waste Land* by Samuel Bowles, David M. Gordon, and Thomas E. Weisskopf (Anchor/Doubleday, $17.95) is more than a curio for Marxism buffs, however, because in their ironic Marxist way the authors get close to some truths that other economists, more loyal to current arrangements, tend to miss. The NLF did win, remember (even if in retrospect that wasn't such a cause for celebration)—and the work ethic doesn't seem to be in such good shape, either.

Die, Bourgeois Dogs

Like other, more traditional, economists, Bowles, Gordon, and Weisskopf think our economy is in decline, a decline reflected in the sluggish growth in productivity over the past two decades. But the radicals convincingly reject many of the traditional explanations for this productivity drop. Excessive government spending? Germany and Sweden spend far more than we do yet outproduce us. Investment shortage? No, investment didn't begin to decline until the mid-seventies, after the economy had already started sliding downhill—and then it declined (supply-siders pay attention) because there was insufficient demand for anything capitalists might want to produce. Not enough spent on research and development? No again—declining R & D couldn't possibly have affected the economy that quickly. Monopoly pricing? Uh-uh—during the seventies the share of assets owned by the 200 largest companies actually decreased.

How, then, do the radicals explain falling productivity? Unlike the standard-issue economists who spend their time trying to explain the economy by mathematical equations and multi-

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variate regression analyses, Marxists are quick to recognize that economic enterprises are political institutions. And a large part of the productivity problem, say Bowles, Gordon, and Weisskopf, is political: a breakdown in the "postwar accord between capital and labor." With the advent of generous unemployment benefits, the "cost to workers of losing their jobs" declined. The result was "declining work intensity." Workers were "less likely to accept the continuing discipline of their supervisors. Unions were emboldened to press for higher wages." The "practice of 'productivity bargaining,' which had linked wage gains to productivity growth, was an early casualty." The radicals note that the rate of growth of total worker compensation rose from 4.1 percent for the period 1959-1966 to 6.8 percent for 1966-1973, while the rate of growth in non-farm output slumped from 2.9 percent to 2.1 percent.

Only a Nixon could go to China, and only a Marxist could get away with arguing that the economy is going to hell because you can't find good help anymore. What's more, Bowles, Gordon, and Weisskopf claim to have proof. They fed data on "worker motivation" and "management control" into their computers, and *their* multivariate regression analysis shows that declining "work intensity" accounted for fully 63 percent of the decline in productivity between 1967 and 1973.

Of course, radical economists don't see this finding in quite the same light that, say, the National Association of Manufacturers would. The radicals invariably describe union demands as an admirable form of "resistance" to capitalist "relations of domination." The bourgeoisie is simply losing the class struggle. As a result, the corporate powers have staged a "full-scale counterattack," putting the economy through the vicious cold-soak of a tight-money recession in a desperate attempt to weaken employees' bargaining leverage (shifting, as we always suspected they

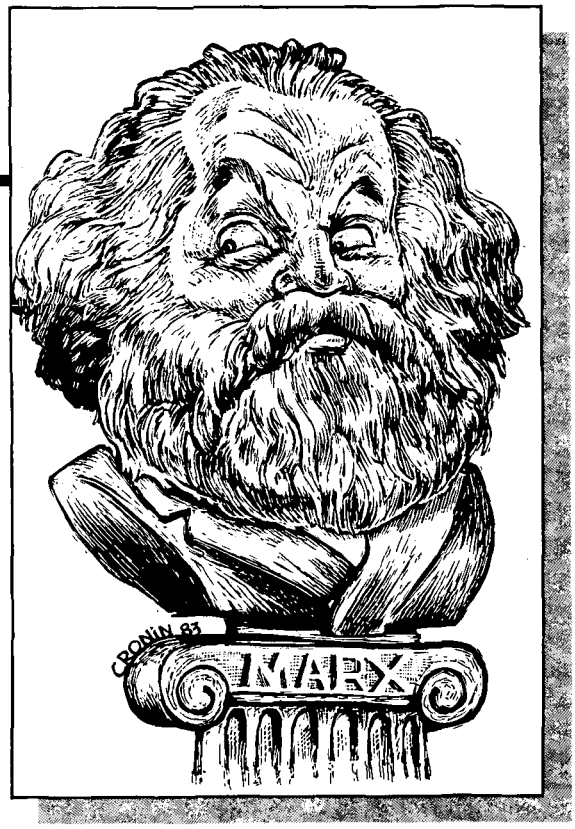

Illustration by Dick Cronin

would, from a benign "demand-constrained accumulation process" to a sinister "exploitation-constrained accumulation process"). The resulting economic crisis (the one we're in now) has only made matters worse for the capitalists, choking off demand, profits, and business innovation—and still labor's power has not been broken, as declines in production "have not been fully matched by reductions in the growth of workers' real incomes."

Bowles and company strike the traditional Marxist tone, laughing from the sidelines, enjoying the delicious contradictions as the very attempts to ameliorate capitalism, through institutions like unions and collective bargaining, fatally weaken it. Agreeing with the most rabid Reaganites, they argue that the economy really *has* been hobbled by the civil rights movement, the consumer-protection movement, and environ-

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mentalism—make that by "popular resistance to corporate domination"—because costly regulations have eaten into profits. Like conservatives, they also see dramatic consequences of America's military decline, as "popular struggles" against "imperialism" increase and multinational corporations are unable to impose their "terms of trade" on Third World nations. Give up, capitalist dogs! The victory of the proletariat is inevitable!

Comrade Reagan

For all its traditional Marxist elements, however, there is something unusual about this year's version of the end of capitalism. Earlier Marxists could sit back and laugh while the *Titanic* was sinking because they claimed to have a lifeboat ready—namely socialism, in which all the "contradictions" of a profit-oriented economy would, of course, vanish. Bowles, Gordon, and Weisskopf are too honest and sophisticated to resort to that traditional "after-the-revolution" device. To their credit, they are willing to set out their own program for restoring economic growth and investment—a 24-plank platform that includes guaranteed public works jobs, "flexible" price controls, "indicative planning," an elected Federal Reserve Board, national health care, and modifications of the labor laws to encourage employee ownership.

Some of the Marxists' proposals are fresh and sensible, like the idea of federalizing all income and payroll taxes to eliminate competition among states to slash business taxes. On the other hand, the radicals join the misguided campaign to guarantee equal pay for jobs of "comparable worth." They urge the government to "establish standards" to "evaluate" the "responsibility, skill, and training requirements" of every job in the country in a sort of all-encompassing civil service system. (This nightmarish blend of the worst in communist and capitalist meritocracy would presumably be demanded by angry workers marching under banners bearing the slogan, "From each according to his resume, to each according to his GS rating.")

A more basic point is that, although their ideas are certainly more tilted toward government intervention than the average position paper of the Young Democrats, the radicals don't really come close to abandoning either the market or the profit motive—what most people would call capitalism. And if capitalism can be modified to "provide both economic recovery and greater democracy" (and the three economists modestly claim a 42 percent increase in GNP for their program), what's all the macho Marxist rhetoric about?

Time and again in *Beyond the Waste Land*, the radicals set up a rigid dichotomy between "pro-business" economics, on the one hand, and their own "democratic" economics, on the other. There seems to be a sort of Law of the Excluded Middle at work here, by which the ideas of liberal economists that don't fit into the "pro-business" half of the dichotomy are either shoehorned in anyway or simply ignored. This law begins to operate as early as chapter one, when the radicals attack the "illusion" that we are living in a "zero-sum economy" where present consumption must be sacrificed for the sake of investment. "Zero-sum" is a trick, the radicals tell us, designed to support regressive Reaganesque policies. They do drop a footnote, admitting that "Lester Thurow's important book *The Zero-Sum Society*. . . develops the zero-sum argument. But unlike most adherents of the zero-sum logic, Thurow does not support a redistribution of income toward corporations and the rich." But this is the last we hear about whatever arguments Thurow made. Thurow doesn't fit the polarized scheme, so he is ignored.

Waste Land does spend a few paragraphs dismissing various "neoliberal" politicians, but in truth there is far less difference than the radicals let on between what they are proposing and what familiar Democratic "rethinkers" like Thurow and Robert Reich are saying. To pick one example, the radicals' anti-inflation plan—tax-based controls—is a familiar neoliberal standby, endorsed by not only Thurow and Gary Hart but also *The New York Times* editorial page. Another of the Marxists' proposals—abolishing the corporate income tax while making corporate earnings immediately taxable to individual (and usually wealthy) shareholders—was recently suggested by Ronald Reagan. (The reporters who subsequently baited Reagan for his "insensitivity" to the poor would do well to read this left-wing endorsement of his position.) What is different in the radicals' platform—their complicated plans for a national "needs survey" to assist economic planners, for instance—is also often what is least appealing in it.

Beyond the Waste Land suggests that radical economics has become more an aesthetic pose than a distinct political viewpoint. Unwilling to

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abandon the trappings of revolutionary doctrine, the Marxists of the sixties flaunt them, much as drugstore cowboys show off the regalia of another defunct way of life. ("What we advocate is not a socialist program," Bowles admitted to the *Village Voice*—but he quickly reassured *Voice* readers that "we are socialists.") It's a question of cultural identity, you might say, rather than economics.

Well, maybe a bit of economics is involved. I don't want to overemphasize this point, since I know Bowles, et al., to be serious, committed people—but radical economists have had a good thing going in the universities for the past decade. They stage their own conferences, publish their own journals, cite each other in their footnotes, get each other tenure. Their academic appeal—their objective class interest, if you will—demands that they continually distinguish themselves from the liberal economists who are their academic rivals. They *must* be different from Thurow, from all the professors who wear ties instead of denim shirts and scurry around advising politicians like Hart and Walter Mondale. And if the difference is that Hart's tax-based price controls would also apply to wages while theirs wouldn't—well, that becomes the difference between an oppressive "pro-business" approach and wholesome "democratic economics."

The insistence of Bowles, Gordon, and Weisskopf on maintaining their radicaler-than-thou pose is unfortunate, because the current debate going on in the left wing of the Democratic Party could use some of their ironic insights. As a piece of economic analysis, *Beyond the Waste Land* is a far more subtle and useful book than other, similar efforts, like Tom Hayden's *The American Future*. Mondale and Hart are just two of the politicians who could benefit from talking to its authors.

And the radicals frankly could benefit from mixing it up with the liberals. Addressing their traditional radical audience, they can get away with too much. In discussing their plan for guaranteed public-service jobs, for example, the radical economists stipulate that the jobs should pay "roughly $6.50 an hour." But, they add, "prevailing union wages would apply to those public jobs created within covered municipal bargaining units." Economists in the mainstream "policy" world would instantly recognize this as a crude fudge. The whole problem with public-service jobs is that practically all of them are arguably "within covered municipal bargaining units," where the prevailing wage is more likely to be $16.50 an hour than $6.50 an hour. If the radicals had to defend themselves at a few Democratic policy symposia, they would be forced to think that one through again.

There are larger blind spots. The radicals realize more clearly than most liberal economists the costs of excessive wage increases. Yet, surprisingly—for Marxists—they ignore the concrete institutional system that gives the unions the power to demand those increases—the collective bargaining system. I don't mean that collective bargaining is necessarily bad. But what makes the radicals think that, once their proposals are in place, powerful unions are going to stop using whatever leverage they have to grab whatever economic benefits they can get? And if unions do tend in that direction, maybe they should be encouraged to change their behavior now, before the revolution. Once they roll up their sleeves and undertake to save the economy, after all, Marxists can no longer simply chuckle at what they themselves pinpoint as one of the main causes of its decline. But no less than the Milton Friedmans and Martin Feldsteins of their profession, the radicals seem uncomfortable translating their statistical findings into reality—real Americans losing their jobs, homes, and dignity—if it means sacrificing a cherished bit of ideology.

Oppose the Pose

A few months ago, I happened to call up the radical economist—a colleague of Sam Bowles—who was my guru in college. He mentioned that he felt trapped on the "useless left" and was trying to escape. He had lined up an appointment with Representative Barney Frank in Washington. Did I know of anyone else he might talk to?

I admired both my teacher's decision and his bluntness. One suspects that *Beyond the Waste Land* was motivated by similar impulses—certainly it represents a giant step out of the "useless left" and back towards the mainstream for its authors. But in the end they were unable to drop the radical pose, the scorn for the liberals in the middle, that has isolated them for so long. That's too bad, because in reality liberals and radicals have more in common than either group cares to admit, including a common need for the fresh insights that they could provide each other.

Lefties of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your tired prejudices. ■

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THE GRIDLOCKED SOCIET.

James Fallows

or the first century and a half of their existence as a "scientific" discipline, economists offered the world a message that could be boiled down to this: What's good for me is good for you. In a world of free economic competition, the steps each person takes to use his talents and sell his wares will create the wealth on which other people live. The invisible hand will steer each man to the proper application of his talents—and will thereby guide the happy republic to the most efficient use of its men, money, and machines.

Then came the Depression, and John Maynard Keynes made his name by explaining that, in certain circumstances, what was good for one might not be good for all. Under conditions like those of the thirties, expectations for the future were so bleak that few sane businessmen would hire new workers or invest in new machines. Though each of their decisions was perfectly reasonable on its own terms, cumulatively they produced not wealth, but breadlines and soup kitchens.

Mancur Olson does not suggest that he has come up with today's equivalent to Keynes, but in *The Rise and Decline of Nations* (Yale University Press, $14.95) he extends the reasoning to its next logical step. In the tangled, modern political economy that has replaced Adam Smith's simple pinmakers and David Ricardo's olive growers, Olson demonstrates that what is good for me will most often be bad for you.

Olson is an economist from the University of Maryland. His book is really addressed to his professional brethren, since it builds to a full charts-and-formulae demonstration of where he stands in the post-Keynesian debates that have kept the academic world hopping in recent years. This will make much of the book rough going for those outside the academic world. Still, Olson has performed the most valuable service a general reader can ask of an economist: he helps us understand behavior that we all recognize but can't easily explain.

In the beginning of his book, Olson says that his theory will help explain such widely noticed developments as the postwar rise of Japan and Germany relative to the U.S., the decline of England relative to nearly everybody, the modern booms in California and Texas, the depression in the industrial Midwest, and the pathetic inability of such big, muscular organizations as labor unions and government to do much about the situation. As a side benefit, he also undertakes to explain why India's caste system choked its development, and why the customs of primogeniture and apartheid arose from a similar economic impulse, working in two different societies. He pulls off nearly all of it, leaving us at the end of the book with everything except a clear idea of what we're supposed to do.

Olson's metaphor for our modern economy is a heart becoming sclerotic. (The tendencies he's talking about are not limited to the 20th century, but his modern evidence is what concerns me here.) As time goes on, plaque accumulates on the arterial walls. After a while, things are so gummed up that the life fluids can barely ooze through.

Other thinkers, from Gibbon to Spengler, have also dwelt on the enfeebled state of a mature society, but they based their judgments mainly on *moral* grounds. Romans became degenerate when life grew too easy, and then they were run over by hardier barbarians. Mancur Olson is not talking about morality, but about economics: specifically, about the reasonable, understandable, but ultimately very harmful things people do to shield themselves from the rigors of the market.

As portrayed in microeconomics, the world of

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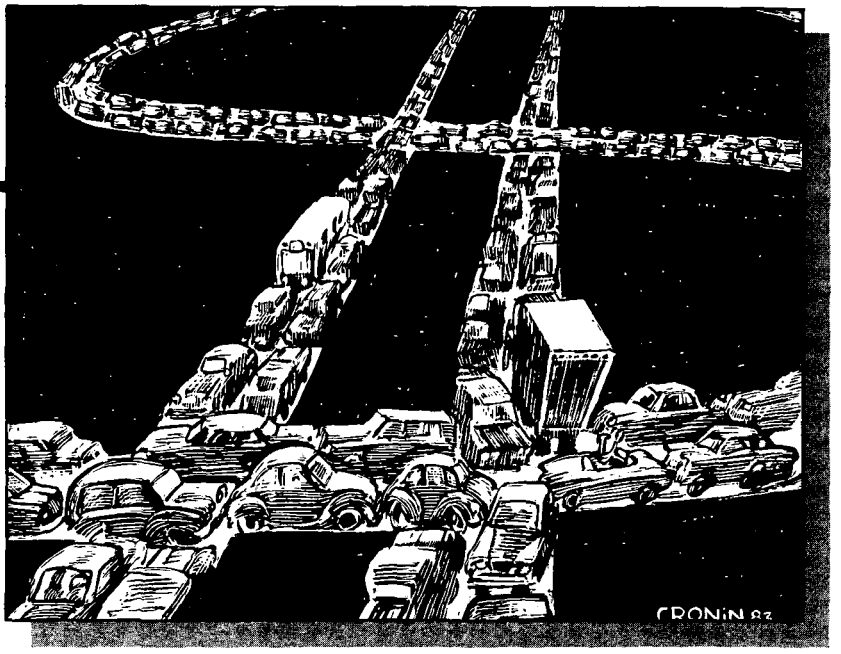

Illustration by Dick Cronin

economic competition is a harsh, demanding place. If you're growing corn, you have to worry about the others who might decide to grow it. More people will do so, threatening your own position in the market, whenever the price of corn seems likely to rise. If you're selling your services, you have to price them at a level that people can afford—to avoid drawing in other competitors lured by the prospect of easy profits.

How much more agreeable the whole process would be if you could shunt off some of this competition. If only you could control how much corn would come onto the market, or force people to buy your services at a higher price than they'd willingly pay, or forbid other people from horning in on your business. All these things are, by definition, difficult to accomplish within the normal workings of the market, since they amount to bending the curves of supply and demand.

What power can work such a feat? The power of government, for one. A government can pass a tariff, grant a subsidy, fix a base price for your product, or permit you to "license"—and thereby keep out—potential competitors in your field. Sometimes the same things can be done without formal government action, through agreements between private groups such as guilds and cartels. In either case, the crucial step is to *organize* in order to put pressure on the government or the other participants in the marketplace.

This last paragraph is a head-of-a-pin condensation of one of Olson's previous books, *The Logic of Collective Action*, as well as of the early part of his new book. The point he is building toward is that the *natural* tendency of any society will be for its members to agglomerate into "distributional coalitions," also known as special-interest groups. These may be labor unions, business cartels, aristocratic groups protected by caste traditions, or other assemblages that use tools beyond those strictly of the market to increase their share of the pie. (This is one of several differences between Olson and the doctrinaire "conservative" who concedes that the Teamsters distort the free market but feels only reverence for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.)

A Nation of OPECs

At first glance, all this may seem obvious, although Olson does hammer home the non-obvious argument that special-interest groups are

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the result of people acting "routinely," by the same economic rules that are supposed to guide the invisible hand, and not "greedily" or "immorally." His next step is more inventive. He says that these coalitions are most likely to develop, and develop fast, in precisely the forms that do the most damage to the rest of the society. Because there is a certain cost attached to undertaking any "collective action"—the dues withheld from union members' paychecks, the fees that corporations pay to their lobbyists and public relations men—special-interest groups will develop most quickly when the number of necessary participants is small. Five aerospace companies will get together more easily than two million farm workers. Not only are the logistics easier, but the payoff is more dramatic. Each one of the five would get a large share of, say, the bigger defense appropriations the firms had lobbied for, while any one of the two million might feel that he would gain less from the formation of a union than he would have to sacrifice (in time, inconvenience, or harassment) to get his fellow workers organized.

One response to Olson's diagnosis is politicians who understand how to speak to us as a nation, not as a grab-bag of interests.

But these small organizations, which are the first to appear (according to Olson's evidence) and always remain the strongest, are also the most destructive to their society's overall well-being. The reason is that they have much, much more to gain by taking money from other groups than by helping everyone generate more wealth. For example:

Suppose one small, powerful "distributional coalition" consists of firms that account for one percent of the entire gross national product. For argument's sake, let us imagine that eight big road-building companies make up this group. If they want to make more money, they have two choices. They could start from the understanding that a booming, prosperous nation will want more roads. Therefore, the road builders would do whatever they could to get the nation back on keel. They would modernize their own machinery to make it more efficient; they would pressure the labor unions to get rid of senseless work rules, enabling the company to lower its prices; they would oppose dubious federal spending, in hopes that the money returned to private pockets would eventually wind up in theirs. They would urge that foreign firms be allowed to bid on construction projects, in hopes that the job could be done for the lowest possible price.

That is approach number one. Approach number two involves saying, To hell with the national economy, I'm looking for mine. This would mean relentless pressure for highway-building projects, perhaps advertised as an anti-recession plan; political collusion with their supposed adversary, the labor unions, to get those projects passed; requests for special tax breaks and depreciation rules for the vital infrastructure-repair equipment; and perhaps a "national security" clause in the highway-fund bill freezing all foreign competitors out of the bidding.

Give up? The preferred approach will be number two, whether we are talking about a company fighting for tariffs or a "tight-budget" congressman who votes to have a dam built in his district. Olson carefully explains this commonsense preference as a matter of costs and benefits. If a small group tightens its belt to help the overall economy, it gets perhaps 1 percent of the benefits—and has endured all of the belt-tightening. But if it takes steps that help its own members, it gets 100 percent of the benefits and pays only a fraction of the overall costs. Therefore, each special-interest group fights for a larger slice, not a larger pie, and the strongest groups fight hardest. In a case like that of our hypothetical road builders, with their one percent of the national income, they will have a reason to fight for special protection unless the harm it imposes on the society is *100 times greater* than the immediate benefit to the group. Olson says:

"The growth of coalitions with an incentive to capture a larger share of the national income

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. . . alters the pattern of incentives and the direction of evolution in a society. The incentive to produce is diminished; the incentive to seek a larger share of what is produced increases. The reward for pleasing those to whom we sell our goods or labor declines, while the reward for evading or exploiting regulations, politics, and bureaucracy and for asserting our rights through bargaining. . . becomes greater."

Implied in this argument is the most important lesson Olson has to preach. Many people shrug off the special-interest question, assuming that the squabbling interests are roughly equivalent to vector forces in physics or checks and balances in constitutional government. That is, they assume that when the dust has cleared, when the cartels have set their prices and the unions have bargained for their work rules, things will reach a natural equilibrium. Everyone will be about as well-off as if there were no "distributional coalitions."

Not true, says Olson. After the coalitions have done their work, nearly everyone will be worse off than otherwise, because the pie itself will have shrunk. The bulk of Olson's book consists of evidence to establish this point. Part of the evidence is historical; Olson shows, in convincing, careful detail, that societies with dense networks of special-interest groups have stagnated, compared with their less-encumbered neighbors. This is part of the story of England today, thick with cartels, unions, and class barriers, versus England 150 years ago, when it was the engine of the industrial revolution. Or of stable, built-up Snowbelt America versus the newer cities of the Southwest. Or of India, with its caste rules defining the whole society as a collection of special-interest groups. According to Olson's theory, the longer a society exists with unchanged borders and a stable political situation, the more it will be bound, like Gulliver, by these tiny strands. Why have Germany and Japan done so much better than England and even the U.S. in the postwar generation? It was not because their old foundries were razed during the war, Olson says, but *because their societies were.* Is it merely coincidental that the three big American cities with the greatest sense of economic vitality—Houston, Miami, and Los Angeles—are the very places where society is being most rapidly shaken up by immigrants from the rest of the country and overseas?

Olson also goes back to Economics 101 to demonstrate why special interests choke an economy. Economic equilibrium depends on flexibility—when prices go up so should supply, and when demand goes down so should prices. When an economy is inflexible, it is inefficient, which means, in the economist's terms, that demand goes unsatisfied and labor stands unused. Under the old "Fair-trade" pricing system, Schwinn might insist that a bicycle that cost $30 to make be sold for no less than $65. All the potential $50 sales—still profitable for the company, and worthwhile for the customer—that the Fair-trade rules prohibited would represent the collective social loss. Similarily, the Davis-Bacon Act requires, in effect, that the government pay the highest union wage for construction projects. There is a lot of public construction work to be done, and many workers who would like to do it—for $12 an hour, instead of the unionized $16. What stands between the two halves of that equation is an inflexible wage.

In emphasizing the efficiency of the market, Olson does not mean to say what some Ayn Rand devotees and other free marketeers do: that whatever distribution of income the market "naturally produces" is ideal. But he does remind us that economists of every political persuasion agree that production is most efficient when prices are flexible.

Party Favors

Where does it leave us? One of Olson's recommendations, consistent with his hostility to cartels, is that we should support free trade. Tariffs are just another form of special-interest protection; they pass costs onto everyone else in the economy, and they shelter the inefficient producer. But beyond that, he has little to suggest—except, by implication, that we lose a war and hope that our conquerers treat us as MacArthur treated Japan, not as the Romans treated Carthage.

If Olson's argument is persuasive, as it obviously is to me, it implies that our economic distortions can be corrected only through a political response. The response would not be a losing war but the "moral equivalent of war," in which the same willingness to sacrifice, the same ability to rise above parochial interests for the good of the nation would be applied to peaceful ends.

That phrase was coined by William James, who contrasted the noble human qualities evoked by war with the destructive purpose they served. Is it not possible, he asked, to call forth the same heroism without the gunshots and the blood?

If "moral equivalent of war" is now a familiar phrase, the responsibility belongs not to James

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but to Jimmy Carter, who used it in his speeches appealing for energy legislation in 1977. Carter's approach illustrates the best and the worst of the politician's ability to deal with the special-interest problem. The best thing about it was its intention: Carter understood that there *was* a special-interest problem, that the accumulation of self-interested decisions could leave everyone worse off. He understood that part of his job, part of the potential of his bully pulpit, was to teach people about the consequences of their actions, and to suggest another path. The worst thing about it, as with so many other things in the Carter years, was its execution. By refusing to explain what this mysterious phrase originally implied, Carter left most of the public, who had never read William James or heard of his essay, with the impression that the "moral equivalent of war" was a kind of holy war against the Arabs.

One response, then, to Olson's diagnosis is politicians who understand how to speak to us as a nation, not as a grab-bag of interests. (For an illustration of the latter, think back on Carter's closing statement in his debate against Ronald Reagan, in which he ticked off the favors he had done for Hispanics, farmers, women, the disabled.) But another answer involves institutions. Some of the countries Olson describes have avoided the handicap of special interests because their main "distributional coalitions" are broad. Instead of construction workers, they include all workers; instead of road builders, all major businesses. The result is to make these groups' interests far more closely aligned with the interests of the entire nation.

In American politics, the broadest, most inclusive institutions are the political parties. Democrats and Republicans may see their interests as opposed, but each of the parties contains a broad enough sample of regional and economic groups to prevent the most harmful forms of special-interest action.

In his biography of Lyndon Johnson, Robert Caro provides a dramatic illustration of how parties can transcend parochial interests. During the 1940 campaign, Johnson, then a congressman, ran the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, which assisted Democratic candidates across the country. There Johnson developed a technique that is now commonplace but was revolutionary at the time: he raised money not just for his own political purposes but to spread around to other candidates. One thing this meant, of course, was that other politicians were put in Johnson's debt; Caro dwells on this at length. But it also meant that the *party's* interests—comparatively broad and moderate—could outweigh extreme local concerns. Johnson took money from Texas oil men and shunted it to labor candidates in the North and Northwest. He took money from Eastern liberals and gave it to conservatives in the Midwest. Their common need for campaign money forced the bitterly divided wings of the party to work out a way of living together—a way of giving a little bit to everyone without pushing any claim to the hilt.

Political parties still have that mediating potential. The problem is that they are weaker now, compared with more narrowly focused groups. According to Mancur Olson, such a development should not be surprising. But it is alarming, and it suggests that our hope for economic survival may lie in the unexpected figure of the traditional, party-minded politician. ■

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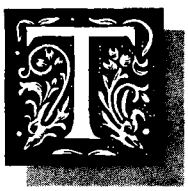
THE CASE FOR TEDDY WHITE

Joseph Nocera



Think of it: In 1961, exactly one book was written about the previous year's presidential campaign. One. And it was good, too. No, make that terrific. Twenty-two years later, *The Making of the President 1960*, by Theodore H. White—a best-seller for nearly a year; a Pulitzer Prize winner; immediately recognized as a landmark event in the history of political journalism—still stands as the best book ever written about an American political campaign.

We've come a long way since then. White's latest book, awkwardly titled *America in Search of Itself—The Making of the President 1956-1980* (Harper & Row, $15.95), stands on the shelf alongside at least a half dozen other books, all purporting to tell "the inside story" of the 1980 campaign. And this has turned out to be a slow season for the genre; in 1968 there were 17 such post-election tomes.

White's latest effort, to be honest, isn't in the same class as the first and subsequent volumes in his *The Making of the President* series, and it lacks the grace and intimacy of *In Search of History*, the volume of memoirs White published in 1978. In certain respects *America in Search of Itself* is also a cranky and annoying work. For example, nothing seems to pain White more than America's fall in power and prestige, and his reaction to it is almost irrationally apoplectic. To him, the beginning of the end came in 1956, when America, "moved more by moralities than by realities," refused to back the French and British in the Suez dispute. "What rises now from my notes and recollections of 1956," he notes sadly, "is indigestible." And of Iran, the country more than any other that symbolized America's new impotence? Here, Teddy White can scarcely contain himself. It is a country, he writes, full of "wild people" living in "a world where civilization as we have known it is ending." Harrumph!

On the other hand, when the standard of comparison for this book is not previous Whites but the works of his most recent contemporaries—most particularly *Blue Smoke and Mirrors* by Jack Germond and Jules Witcover, *Watershed* by John F. Stacks, and *Portrait of an Election* by Elizabeth Drew—you can't help but come away thinking that *America in Search of Itself* stands up remarkably well. This is partly because Teddy White is a more gifted writer than the others; when you read all four books in succession (as I did not too long ago) that is the first difference that strikes you. But an even more important reason reveals itself when you look at how White's contemporaries have sought to emulate some of his techniques, and how they've chosen to ignore others. Read White's books and you will quickly realize that there are always two distinct threads running concurrently through his narrative. One has to do with the minutiae of the campaign itself and the strategies and memos—the little details that lodge themselves in the reader's memory. The other has to do with the large, overriding problems facing the country and how those problems interconnect with the day-to-day campaigning. Both themes have been there from the very first book in the series; both have been equally important to White's success as a political journalist; and both offer lessons for the hundreds of other political journalists who have covered presidential campaigns in the ensuing 22 years. The tragedy of political reporting in our time is that White's successors—and this includes Germond and Witcover, Stacks, and (to a lesser degree) Drew—learned only one of the lessons Teddy White was teaching. It happened to be the easiest lesson, and one they learned all too well.

Joseph Nocera is an associate editor of Texas Monthly *and a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly.

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The Detail Detail

The easy lesson Teddy White taught, of course, and the one everyone in the business understood instantly, is that there was more to a campaign than stump speeches, a couple of conventions, and a count of the votes at the end. As Germond and Witcover point out in their introduction to *Blue Smoke and Mirrors*, White was the first reporter to explain to readers that candidates had written, long-term strategies well in advance of the first primary. In 1960, it was the "O'Brien Manual" (authored by Kennedy strategist Lawrence F. O'Brien), which provided "the diagram of organization for every Kennedy campaign from beginning to end." Continue Germond and Witcover: "If the voters had thought much about it, of course, they might have realized there was something more to a presidential election campaign than. . . . shaking hands on a street corner. But most people hadn't thought about it, and there was an inevitable loss of innocence. . . . "

And not just among the voters, either, folks. Any reporter young enough to have missed the pre-Teddy era is bound to be struck, upon reading *The Making of the President 1960*, by how *tame* it seems. It has its share of inside skinny and color, but it also adheres to the more traditional reporting of the day: the requisite interviews with all the announced candidates, gobs of speech coverage, and two chapters on the respective conventions that contain some behind-the-scenes reporting but not a lot. By the time you've finished the convention chapters, you've begun asking (or at least I had): *This* is the book that started a revolution?

But then go to the library and look up some pre-Teddy campaign coverage, and suddenly it's clear. In 1960 John Stack's employer, *Time* magazine, managed to turn one of the most exciting stretch drives in American political history into snoozeville. *Time*'s idea of recreating the drama of election night was to give an hour-by-hour countdown of the vote tally. ("8 to 9 o'clock. Nixon winged ahead in early bird returns. . . . 9 to 10 o'clock. Gulping down mounting returns, network computers giddily upped the odds on Kennedy." z-z-z-z-z. . . .) As for those telling behind-the-scenes anecdotes, *Time*'s way of getting inside the campaign was to reprint whatever self-serving pap the press secretaries threw its way. ("His raw-rubbed nerves jangled all the more with his determination to win. . . .'When I first began this campaign,' he said grimly, 'I just wanted to beat Nixon. Now I want to save him from the country.' ")

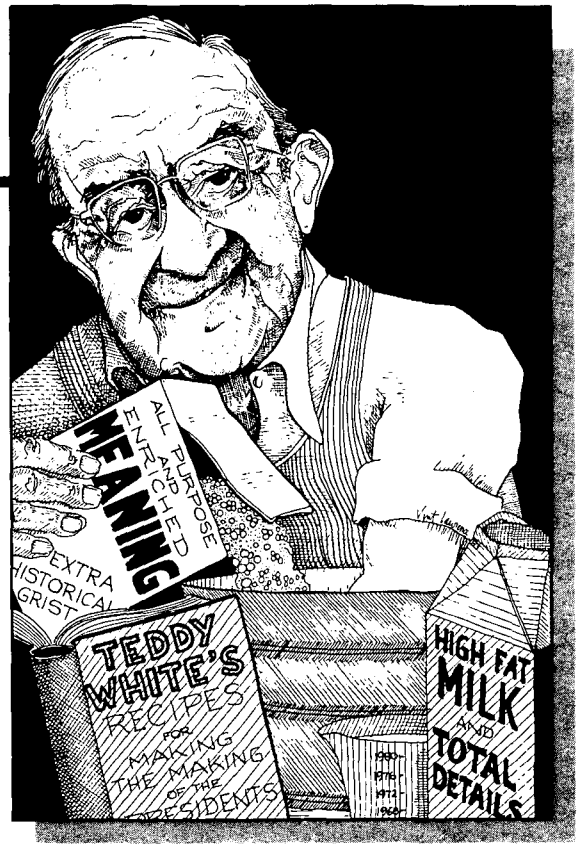

Illustration by Vint Lawrence

What a moment it must have been in Washington when White's book first appeared. All over town, scales falling from the eyes as it suddenly dawned on the nation's corps of political reporters that . . . could it really be true? . . . their work

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didn't *have* to be boring! They didn't have to spend all their time during election season filing reports on the latest campaign speech. Campaigns had drama! Excitement! There were details and anecdotes that could be woven into the fabric of campaign reporting—that told volumes more than speech reporting ever could about the character of the candidate and the shape of his campaign. To be sure, most of the details and anecdotes took place behind the scenes, but thanks to Teddy White, it was okay now to write what was going on behind the scenes. It turned out that people were really interested in all that information that had previously been labeled "For Cognoscenti Only." They wanted more. And boy, did they ever get it.

White was interested in more than the Quemoys and Matsus. He also wanted to show how America was changing.

We all know what happened after that. By 1968 White had become an institution, and the style of reporting he pioneered had firmly taken hold in the journalism business. What had once been so obscure was now so obvious: *How else* could you report a campaign if you didn't dig behind the scenes, collect those anecdotes, and find out what was *really* going on? How else indeed? By 1972, Abe Rosenthal, the managing editor of *The New York Times,* was telling his troops (according to Timothy Crouse), "We aren't going to wait until a year after the election to read in Teddy White's book what we should have reported ourselves." So ingrained was this attitude that even the wire services—who practically pride themselves on the blandness of their reporting—were on the team. The Associated Press told its people that "when Teddy White's book comes out there shouldn't be one single story in that book we haven't reported ourselves."

It wasn't just reporting that had changed in the 12 years since White's first campaign book; reporters had changed too. For starters, they were more cynical than they used to be, and some of that cynicism rubbed off in their attitude towards the man who had originally pointed the way. Teddy White, they now thought (again, according to Crouse), was "a pathetic, written-out hack"—too nice to his subjects, too coddled by people in power, too easily conned, too eager to curry favor with presidents and prospective presidents. And to these accusations, there was some truth. To reread *The Making of the President* series is to quickly realize that Teddy White never met a presidential aspirant he didn't like. His fawning over Nixon is what stands out most today ("Richard Nixon, the peacemaker, had written his first message of the campaign of 1972"), but White fawned almost as much over Kefauver, over Stevenson, over Humphrey, over all of them. I remember thinking at the time (having just graduated from journalism school, full of the appropriate fire in my belly) that this was a sin for which Teddy White deserved to be roundly flogged. Looking back, this seems like a quibble; White's books have stood up so well over the years it hardly matters that he occasionally fawns.

At the same time the fraternity was turning against White, he had a few complaints of his own about what the fraternity had done to "his" reporting method. He recalled for Crouse the scene in George McGovern's hotel suite immediately after McGovern had nailed down the Democratic nomination:

"McGovern was like a fish in a goldfish bowl. There were three different network crews at different times. The still photographers kept coming in in groups of five. And there were at least six writers sitting in the corner. . . watching him work on his acceptance speech, poor bastard. He tries to go into the bedroom with Fred Dutton to go over the list of vice presidents. . . and all of us are observing him, taking notes like mad, getting all the little details, which I think I invented as a method of reporting and which I now sincerely regret. . . . Who gives a fuck if the guy had milk and Total for breakfast?"

White was not guiltless in the matter; it was his 1960 book, after all, that had observed: "[Kennedy] asked Dave Powers to cook something and Powers fried him eggs in butter, offered him toast and jelly and served two glasses of milk, and the nominee went to bed." Yet his second thoughts fell on deaf ears (remember—he was a "pathetic, written-out hack"). If anything, the milk-and-Total approach to campaign reporting is even more a part of the culture of the press today than it was a decade ago.

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Up to a point, there was nothing wrong with the approach. In 1964, *Time*'s coverage improved dramatically, due in no small part to a new-found attention to inside skinny and reportorial detail. Thus was the first of Teddy White's lessons quickly absorbed: details are important. On one level, the details help explain what is going on in the campaign—what the strategies are and how they are being played out, what the candidates are thinking and feeling, and so on. On another level, interesting details and anecdotes are useful simply in keeping the reader *reading*. Both are worthy goals. And if this penchant for gathering details has turned into a mania, somewhat out of control (more on this later), you still have to concede that we're better off than we were before White ended our collective innocence.

Total Coverage

It is the second lesson of Teddy White's books that has turned out to be the harder one to grasp, a lesson that even today is beyond the reach of most campaign reporters. That lesson is that there is more to great political reporting than simply telling stories. What has set White apart—then, and now—has been, first, his desire to give the election he was covering some larger, historical meaning, and, second, his belief that to tell the full story of a presidential campaign, one also has to tell some of the story of the country at large. So Teddy White was always interested in more than the Quemoys and Matsus, the $1,000-to-every-family promises, the "lust in my heart" faux pas, and all the other two-day "issues" that ebb and flow as part of the rhythm of any campaign. He also wanted to get at the real problems facing the country—whether the candidates were talking about those problems or not. He wanted to explain the issues that were uppermost on people's minds, to show how the country was changing and what those changes meant to us as a nation. In other words, he always had one eye on the big picture.

Why this side of White's work never generated much excitement within the profession is hard to understand, but it surely wasn't any fault of White's. When tackling these larger issues, he is not coy about his purpose. He does not try to disguise his larger points, or hint at them between the lines, or let them seep up, implicit but unsaid, through the cracks in the narrative. He just comes right out and makes them, in plain, unvarnished language. (Elizabeth Drew, who makes some attempt to address the larger issues, is constantly trying to sneak her message through the seams of the story she's telling, as if she feels that actually saying what she thinks about something would be a crime against literature.)

Through that first *The Making of the President* book, then, there is this constant intermingling of the tiny campaign details with the larger themes. White describes Kennedy walking on the beach with his father—and he also describes the state of the nation's public school system. He explains the attraction of Richard Nixon to the people living in the farm belt, but then goes on to explain the state of the farm economy. He tells what John Kennedy did the day after he was elected ("The movies began with an action picture with John Wayne, and since that satisfied no one, they interrupted it. . . "), but also tells us what it was about America in 1960 that allowed John Kennedy to become its president. Some 22 years after the fact, both the details of the campaign and the larger themes still hold our interest; that in itself is a tribute to White's skill as a writer. And it seems to me that it is precisely his balancing of the large and small that gives the book its resonant quality. Had it been too heavily weighted in one direction or the other, I suspect today it would seem either too dull on the one hand, or too ephemeral on the other.

But then again, one of my favorite moments in any Teddy White book is that point where he puts the balancing act aside for a moment and devotes an entire chapter to some issue he considers important. These chapters are anything *but* dull. In 1960, for instance, White spent 40 pages, in a chapter titled "Retrospect on Yesterday's Future," lingering over the recently released census. The census, of all things! Yet the title was the only thing boring about that chapter. It's got numbers, of course, but it also has one of the best explanations you'll ever read of how the country was changing demographically during Eisenhower's administration: the exodus to the suburbs, the growth of the large public and private bureaucracies, the explosion of white-collar jobs in America, and so on. (One of the many little nuggets in that chapter: between 1945 and 1960, the ratio of blue-collar workers to white-collar workers at Boeing changed from 3:1 blue-collar to 3:2 white-collar.) What White was writing then is accepted wisdom now, but no one was thinking about it much at the time. It occurred to me as I was rereading that chapter recently that the only other reporter who had as good a feel for how America was chang-

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ing—though he approached it from a completely different direction—was Tom Wolfe.

In his 1964 book, White again had an issues chapter; this time he wrote about the history and growth of the civil rights movement. Then in 1968, his subject was crime and violence in America. Nixon, you'll recall, was using the code words "law and order" as one of his big themes that year, but White went well beyond the code and beyond the purely political ramifications of the crime problem (though he didn't ignore the politics of crime, either). This, alas, is the first cranky chapter to be found in *The Making of the President* series—White can't hide his resentment toward the hippies and the rioting blacks who dominated the news during that election campaign—but it is also full of good information. In 1972, White again took on the census and successfully wrestled it to the ground.

In their quest for details, Germond and Witcover sometimes fail to distinguish between the important and the frivolous.

Missed Connections

There's no better way to appreciate the richness of White's political observations than to read closely the works of those who consider themselves heirs to his throne. The leading candidates are Jack Germond and Jules Witcover. Both have been political reporters for a long time; Germond has been on the national political beat for over 20 years and Witcover nearly 30. With all that experience, all that accumulated savvy, you would think they would bring to a book some sense of "what it all means," or at least some feel for how politics has changed in the time they have been covering it, and how that affected the process of getting elected in 1980. But they don't. Instead, they offer a classic case study of reporters who have learned White's first lesson but not his second, and their book is the poorer for it.

What Germond and Witcover offer in *Blue Smoke and Mirrors* is details, many of which give the serious student a deeper understanding of the 1980 campaign. But in the modern era, everybody from *The New York Times* to *The San Jose Mercury* is after those very same details and is busily printing them during the campaign. So quite often, Germond and Witcover's telling anecdotes are bound to give a reader a distinct sense of deja vu. And what anecdotes they have that are new are often a good deal less than telling.

Here's one fairly typical instance: "The motorcade sped away," they write, "leaving behind one member of the press pool notified late, Terrence Smith of *The New York Times*. Smith hitched a ride in a network car and raced to the airport, vainly seeking the entrance to the proper military gate at the vast O'Hare complex. There he came upon one of Carter's young press aides and they hopped into the network car on the run and all together they barely made it to Air Force One. The president had already boarded." In their quest for details Germond and Witcover sometimes fail to make any distinction between the important and the frivolous; really, who cares if Terrence Smith almost missed his plane?

Germond and Witcover are hardly the only guilty parties; whether it's Stacks's once-over-lightly recap of the campaign's major events or Drew's accounts of major speeches that include the auditorium's interior design, this eagerness for irrelevant detail constantly reveals itself. In fact, it is precisely because the milk-and-Total approach has become such a staple of newspaper and magazine campaign reporting that a book has to do more; it has to offer its audience something they don't get in their daily news diet. That something is—or ought to be—thought. Details are necessary all right, but sometimes the frantic search for them reveals how thoughtless political reporting has become.

One example of this last point can be found in Germond and Witcover's coverage of a tiny event called the Maine presidential forum, which took place a year before the election. Their account of the forum is straightforward and workman like—it also borders on the surreal. Let me quote a bit of it to show you what I mean: "When the ballots were finally counted, George Bush had defeated Howard Baker 466 to 446. The planeload of reporters had a much better story than they had anticipated—a 'stunning victory,' to use the favored cliche. . . . Baker himself was aware of how serious a loss he had suffered. Later that night he

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told his wife, McMahan, and another close adviser, James Cannon, 'It may not be possible to recover from this.'"

A respected senator gets knocked out of a presidential race by 20 votes? A full year before the election? It seems crazy—it *is* crazy—but Germond and Witcover, and the rest of the press who reported it at the time, are perfectly willing to accept the event on face value.

To get an idea of what Germond and Witcover could have done with this same material, we need only to turn to Teddy White. There, in *America in Search of Itself*, we learn how the country got to the point where something as trivial as the Maine presidential forum could knock out a Howard Baker. One of the best parts of White's book describes the recent history of the primaries, from the point at which they first became crucial to a candidate's chances (1956, in White's opinion) to the present. From reading that, you get some idea of how primaries have snowballed to the point where they're out of control, and how non-primary events like straw polls and caucuses have also become important in the weeding-out process. It doesn't make the process itself any less crazy, but at least it makes it more understandable.

"I had reported. . . . campaigns for a quarter of a century," writes White in this last installment of his campaign reports, "and had seen what was, in retrospect, one of the great periods of change in American history." We have been lucky to have had him around to help explain that change, and his departure from the campaign press plane will leave a void. There is no heir in sight. As the 1984 election approaches it is likely that most reporters will continue to avoid substantive examinations of what the candidates believe and how well they understand history and government, in part because the reporters themselves often lack such understanding. They instead will focus on the details of each candidate's organization, speculate on who will win the next primary, and stay ever vigilant for the inevitable gaffes that attend any campaign. Some of this will be entertaining; almost none of it will really inform.

Teddy White's example offers a way for reporters to do much better than that. But until they learn to heed White's second lesson, until they realize that caring about the country is as important as writing down the details, until they learn that history is more than what happened in the last campaign—until that day comes, Teddy White will remain the king of the hill. ■

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WHO'S WHO in the Administration

Recently Lou Cannon of *The Washington Post* reported that in any potential shakeup of the top staff at the White House the big winner would probably be national security adviser **William Clark**, who Cannon reported could advance to chief of staff if **James Baker** takes a Cabinet post or goes home to Texas. Sources in a position to know say that this version of possible changes is not entirely unrelated to the fact that "the Judge" (as Clark is called) is Cannon's main source right now. (Given the toughness of Cannon's recent coverage, he may be his only big source left.)

For some additional evidence on why Cannon and Clark are on such good terms, recall that during the 1980 campaign Cannon did Clark a favor. Reagan held a press conference at which he promised to appoint a woman to the Supreme Court, adding that as governor of California he had named only bar association-certified candidates to the state bench. The truth was that Clark, whose qualifications included flunking the bar exam, had not been certified before being appointed by Reagan to the California Supreme Court. Cannon, who covered Clark when he was Reagan's California chief of staff, knew Reagan had not told the truth about Clark but didn't embarrass the Judge by reporting it.

Apparently the administration's two chief economic policy makers are at war. Treasury Secretary **Donald Regan** and **Martin Feldstein**, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, are said by insiders to speak to each another only with great effort. Part of it is over policy—Regan is more anxious than Feldstein to take steps to stimulate economic recovery—but much of it is personal. Regan believes Feldstein is a head-in-the-clouds academic who believes the world works the way his Harvard models tell him. Feldstein views Regan as merely a Wall Street businessman whose knowledge of economics is so sketchy that after his easy conversion into a supply-sider he has reverted into a thoroughly muddle-headed policy maker.

Meanwhile, the one member of the administration who has shown some foresight at all about the seriousness of the nation's economic condition, Commerce Secretary **Malcolm Baldrige**, finds that his early, correct warnings to Reagan have not won him any chits. . . .

Our audio-visual president has another aid. Reagan's written briefings from the CIA are reportedly now being supplemented by a videotape that Reagan can tune into. . . .

In

WHITE HOUSE

Special Assistant to the President—**Joseph R. Holmes** has been director of military television and radio services.

Assistant to the President for Public Liaison—**Faith Ryan Whittlesey** has been ambassador to Switzerland.

INTERIOR

Undersecretary—**J.J. Simmons** has been a member of the Interstate Commerce Commission.

LABOR

Assistant Administrator for Enforcement—**Charles M. Williamson** has been acting assistant administrator.

AGENCIES AND COMMISSIONS

Deputy Chief, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency—**David F. Emery** is a former congressman from Maine.

U.S. Representative, Mutual Balanced Force Reduction Talks—**Morton I. Abramowitz** is a career diplomat. He replaces Richard Staar, who was fired last month.

Out

WHITE HOUSE

Assistant Director for Management Improvement and Evaluation, Office of Management and Budget—**Howard Messner** will become comptroller at the Department of Energy.

HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research—**Emanuel S. Savas** has been suspended with pay for allegedly asking his staff to help prepare his recent book, *Privatizing the Public Sector*.

Deputy Undersecretary for Field Coordination—**Daniel M. Hughes** has resigned to return to the real estate business in New Hampshire.

AGENCIES AND COMMISSIONS

Chairman, Commodity Futures Trading Commission—**Phillip McBride Johnson** has resigned.

Assistant Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency—**Rita Lavelle** has been fired by President Reagan.

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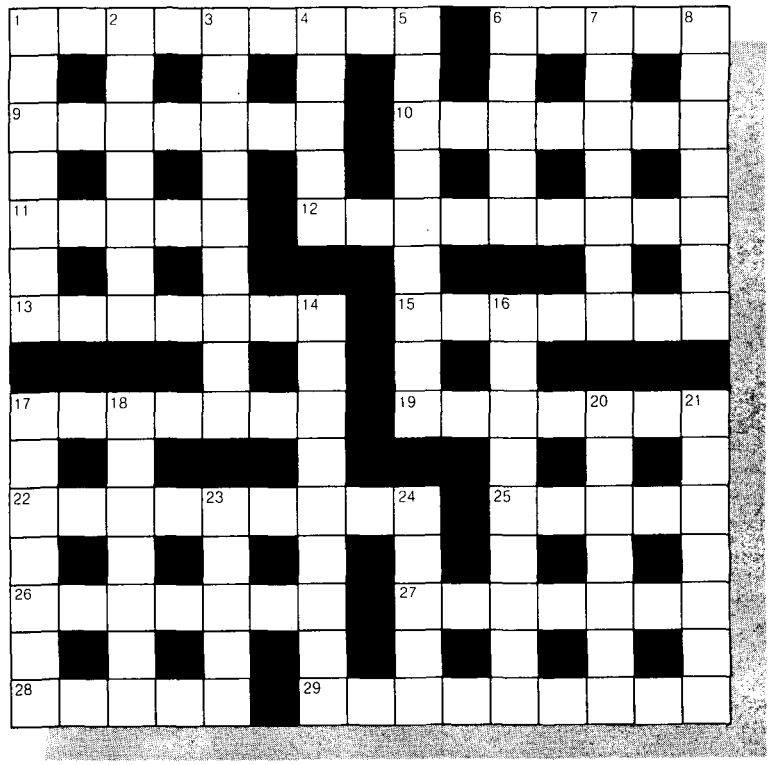
POLITICAL PUZZLE



by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g., (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g., USA, are treated as one word.

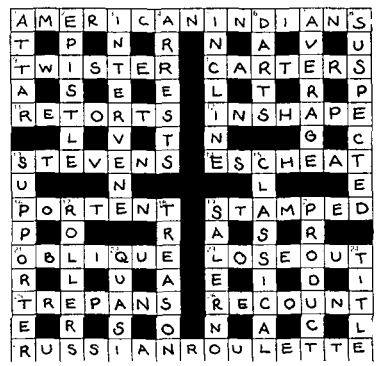
ACROSS

1. Mistakenly tramping a Northern bird. (9)
6. Strange lamps illumine the Scripture. (5)
9. Johnny comes back about land but not as sharp. (7)
10. Constructed nervier scale. (7)
11. Stop when she has electrical approval. (5)
12. Clam or crab without a letter would make strong pitch. (4-5)
13. Take off one tassel artfully. (3,4)
15. Timed to rudely be left out. (7)
17. Explosive school books? (7)
19. Draw out former land holding? (7)
22. Changed clothes made things right? (9)
25. Come back and trace carefully. (5)
26. Famous for turning away restaurant patrons? (7)
27. Wet hand becomes first thing. (3,4)
28. A shame about G.B.'s brother? (5)
29. Claim poet discovered Egyptian period. (9)

DOWN

1. Craft for JFK or Barnum? (2,5)
2. Opposed to one advance beginning step. (7)
3. Center cure for pre-senior status. (6,3)
4. Right around the body. (5)
5. Ravenous denial? (9)
6. Separates 4 Down coming up. (5)
7. Food conveyed in metal. (7)
8. Red lamb nicely streaked. (7)
14. Wayward children organized steel shop. (4,5)
16. Step in and make finer tree. (9)
17. Vegetable accuses another coming up. (7)
18. Where young Reagan placed economy? (2,5)
20. Where Florence and Selma meet? (7)
21. Really big disaster? (7)
23. Twisted bowel bend. (5)
24. Repeat appearance in audit tomorrow. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. *Henry S. Bradsher. Duke University, $30/$12.50.*

After Long Silence. *Michael Straight. Norton, $17.50.*

The American Style of Foreign Policy. *Robert Dalbek. Knopf, $16.95.*

The Belts of the Kremlin. *Arvo Tuominen. University of New England, $20.*

Charlie Company: What Vietnam Did to Us. *Peter Goldman, Tony Fuller. Morrow, $15.95.*

Consequences of Party Reform. *Nelson W. Polsby. Oxford, $17.50.*

Deadly Deceits: My 25 Years in the CIA. *Ralph W. McGehee. Sheridan Square Publications, $7.95.* Unlike other embittered former CIA agents, the author chose to submit his manuscript to the CIA's Publications Review Board before it was printed. Considering what the Supreme Court did to Frank Snepp after he refused to submit his work, McGehee didn't have much choice—even though, like Snepp (and unlike Philip Agee), he had no intention of revealing classified information.

The appendix covering his hassles with the review board is the most intriguing part of this otherwise familiar tale of a man who entered the agency as a super-patriot and left in 1977 seething with anger over the CIA's immorality and incompetence (they couldn't even get his commendation right).

First, the agency tried to delete information about Southeast Asia that had already been disclosed in the Pentagon Papers, claiming, incredibly, that the Pentagon Papers had not been "officially released" (which should be news to high-school term paper writers across the country). Then, the agency tried to *re*classify previously declassified information under a Reagan executive order that was then only in draft form. Neither gambit worked, though the CIA still succeeded in deleting dozens of passages, which are marked in the text. McGehee writes that if he hadn't had the help of ACLU lawyer Mark Lynch to guide him through the Kafka-esque process, the book wouldn't have been published at all.

What sort of information did the CIA delete? McGehee wanted to report that the agency had close connections to Thai police organizations, a point revealed years earlier in a book written at the behest of the CIA itself. The review board sought to excise that reference as well as a point about a "technique" that turned out to be nothing more than recruiting agents from the other side, which, as the author notes, is a profession almost as old and well-known as prostitution.

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Do It My Way or You're Fired! *David W. Ewing. John Wiley, $17.95.* The author, managing editor of *Harvard Business Review*, examines the current state of employee rights and the ways dissent can improve corporate productivity. The results are mixed. The numerous case histories make for good reading and the author's main point—that everyone suffers in offices where good ideas remain locked in the lower levels of the office bureaucracy because workers fear criticism from intolerant managers—is well taken. What disappoints is the author's failure to offer suggestions more concrete than his call for organizations to develop mechanisms to "resolve disputes with dissidents fairly."

—Thomas Freedman

The Economies of Industrial Innovation. *Christopher Freeman. MIT, $25.*

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Final Judgment: My Life as a Soviet Defense Attorney. *Dina Kaminskaya. Simon & Schuster, $18.95.*

A General's Life: An Autobiography. *Omar N. Bradley, Clay Blair. Simon & Schuster, $19.95.*

Grunch of Giants. *R. Buckminster Fuller. St. Martin's, $8.95.*

Inside the Soviet Army. *Viktor Suvorov. Macmillan, $15.95.* The author, an officer in the Soviet army for 14 years, shares the same phobia as Caspar Weinberger: "In the world today, there are millions of refugees. All of them are in flight from communism." But underneath the predictable anti-Soviet cliches and turgid style, something of value occasionally appears. While America's military planners seem obsessed with a few, highly sophisticated (and often unreliable) weapons, the Soviets tend toward an opposite extreme. Old Soviet weapons never die, they just get mothballed, and vintage World War II smooth-bore mortars are preferred to the newer, more accurate rifled variety because they are cheaper to mass-produce. The soldiers themselves also lack sophistication; "Most," Suvorov says, "do not know how to read a map." Indeed, though the morale of soldiers is often the most imporant factor on the battlefield, Suvorov believes that it is so low among his former colleagues that "if war with the West should break out, Soviet soldiers would surrender by the millions."

—James Gibney

JFK: The Presidency of John F. Kennedy. *Herbert S. Parmet. Dial, $19.95.*

The London Embassy. *Paul Theroux. Houghton Mifflin, $13.95.*

The New High Ground: Systems and Weapons of Space Age War. *Thomas Karas. Simon & Schuster, $14.95.*

The News Business. *John Chancellor, Walter Mears. Harper & Row, $12.95.*

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The Poison Consipiracy. *Karl Grossman. Permanent Press, $15.95*

The Reagan Phenomenon—And Other Speeches on Foreign Policy. *Jeane J. Kirkpatrick. American Enterprise Institute, $14.95.* This collection of speeches and essays is a vivid and disturbing example of a world view that sees human rights and all other concerns in Cold War terms. Kirkpatrick offers some telling criticisms of the United Nations, but in her unalloyed defense of conservative policies she proves more tiresome and dogmatic than convincing. Her recurring insistence that "communist subversion" is so important that the U.S. should overlook the transgressions of its allies undermines her arguments by displaying the same simplistic thinking she accuses conventional liberals of applying to foreign policy issues.

—*Michelle Gilbert*

Salvador. *Joan Didion. Simon & Schuster, $12.95.*

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The Soviet Union and the Arms Race. *David Holloway. Yale, $14.95.*

Ten Presidents and the Press. *Kenneth W. Thompson, ed. University Press of America, $17.50 /$7.25* This short volume is a transcript of conversations between veteran journalists and academicians participating in a recent symposium on press-president relations since Woodrow Wilson. Though this group (which includes former White House correspondents Chalmers Roberts and Robert Donovan) can't resist the occasional temptation to dwell on the obvious, it's a worthwhile book (particularly for its anecdotes) for those interested in the evolution of the presidential press conference from the informal gatherings around FDR's desk to the orchestrated media event of today.

—*John Harris*

Too Hot to Handle: Social and Policy Issues in the Management of Radioactive Wastes. *Charles A. Walker, Leroy C. Gould, Edward J. Woodhouse, eds. Yale, $20/$5.95.*

The Voice of the Poor: Essays in Economic and Political Persuasion. *John Kenneth Galbraith. Harvard, $8.95.* This slim volume, while demonstrating that John Kenneth Galbraith retains his graceful writing style and pungent wit, is a disappointment. The essays here, by Galbraith's own admission, are little more than edited versions of lectures he gave last year in India; and though they offer his thoughts on the pressing issues of the day (the arms race is self-destructive, the nuclear freeze is praiseworthy, Reaganomics is silly), they offer little in the way of new insights.

One wishes that Galbraith might instead apply his considerable talents to a fresh examination of the economic theories (his own included) that have so far proved unable to explain fully the current global recession. Time is ripe for such a reevaluation.

—*Phil Keisling*

The War Against Hitler: Military Strategy in the West. *Albert A. Nofi, ed. Hippocrene, $22.50.*

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3. Interstate compacts represent a level of government, between federal and state, created to address specific problems. During the last two years (1980 and 1981) five new compacts have surfaced with major revisions possible in two others dealing with such diverse problems as planning in the Lake Tahoe region, low-level radioactive waste management, and drivers' licensing. Legally, such compacts are without analogy and take precedence over conflicting statutes in a compact state.
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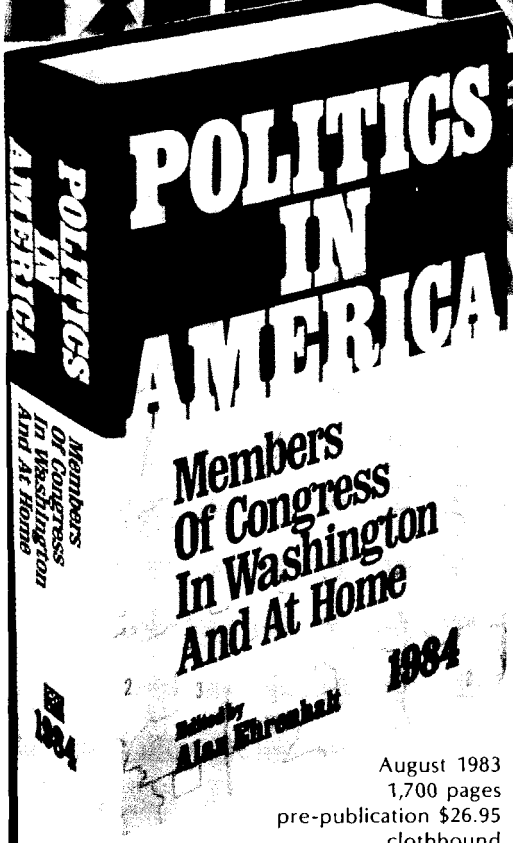

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